1918

The SMART SET

A Magazine of Cleverness

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Vol. LIV. MARCH, 1918 No. 3

The SMART SET

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AND

BURLESQUES, EPIGRAMS, POEMS, SHORT SATIRES, ETC.

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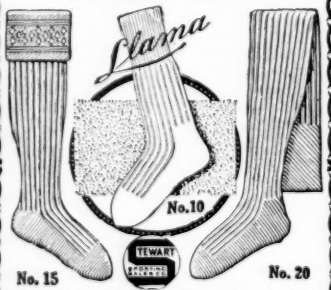

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Vol. LIV. MARCH, 1918 No. 3

The SMART SET

The Aristocrat Among Magazines

LAMPLIGHT

By David Morton

LAMPLIGHT and quiet and the mellow haze,
Rimming us round in deep and glad content,
Safe from that dark where, stricken and adaze,
Life's fragile barques are blown and tossed and rent:
We are two islanders, and all about
Our charmed Hesperides the black storms beat,
While we, secure from every wind or doubt,
Eat of our golden fruit, and find it sweet.

So have I mused, lost in a playful dream
That led my fancy on this hour past,
The while I watched the lamplight's changing gleam
Shimmer along your hair, until at last,
Across our isle I reach my hand to you,
And know that dreams are thrilling still—and true.

ET TU, BRUTE?

By John Hamilton

HE was drunk.

I knew when he swallowed his twenty-seventh cocktail that he was wholly drunk.

His eyes were bloodshot and his lower lip was ungentlemanly moist.

He spoke to me.

"Behind you is a most extraordinary figure," he said. "It is the color of Camembert and is smeared with fresh paint and it has wide teeth as green as crême-de-menthe and on its tail hangs a pink ribbon."

"You are drunk,"I jeered.

"It has five legs," he persisted, "and around its scrawny neck is a necklace of live butterflies. Look at it."

I turned with dignity.

* * * *

He was not drunk!

I saw it myself.

TO A BROADWAY HOTEL

By Christopher Morley

HOTEL, hotel, burning bright
In the jewelled Broadway night,
What remorseless hand or eye
Planned that caravanserai?

What mephistophelian will
Schemed the Benedictine Grill?
Who the lawless decorators
Of those Moorish elevators?

Medley of conflicting styles!
Gothic ceilings, blue Dutch tiles,
Tesselated Turkish floors,
Quattrocento cuspidors!

What most godless architect
Did this frantic job direct?
The only human places are
The cigar-stand, and the bar!

FREEDOM

By Thyra Samter Winslow

I

Helen Céleste Boudinot Fracier
Daughter of
Elisha Boudinot and
Elizabeth Ogden Fracier
Born May 18, 1854
Died September 21, 1901
Blessed are the dead who die in
the Lord.

THE inscription was carefully chiseled on one of the double rows of square slabs of marble, each indicating where a coffin had been inserted in the vault of the house of Fracier in All Saints' Cemetery.

The slab itself was not different in appearance from the one which announced the same general facts and hopes concerning Elisha Boudinot Fracier, who died a few months after his daughter, nor those concerned with Fraciers whose deaths predated that of Elisha by a good hundred years. Yet to Helen Céleste Boudinot Fracier, niece and namesake of the Helen Céleste Boudinot Fracier who died at the age of forty-seven in the Year of Our Lord Nineteen Hundred and One, there seemed to be a great deal of difference.

Perhaps Helen thought intently about the slab which covered the coffin of her aunt and told her brief history because it was at her aunt's funeral that she had first pondered, seriously, about Life and Death and Freedom.

Aunt Helen had died when her namesake was fifteen. Helen never forgot the funeral. Aunt Helen had been one of her father's two sisters and had made her home with them. Aunt Helen had been born in the family home in West Twelfth Street, as her father and Aunt Grace had been, and as Helen had been, too. Aunt Helen's funeral, too, as was fitting, had been from the home in Twelfth Street. Helen always remembered the heavy feeling of the big living-room, the small group of mourners in black, dignifiedly silent, unapproachable; the friends, fewer than had been expected, as always, correctly sympathetic; the unbreathable air, full of old dust and the perfume of funeral flowers.

It had rained, and they had gone to the cemetery in rented funeral hacks, with slow-moving horses. The servants had used the family's lone and rather green-turned equipage.

Standing near the vault, between her mother and her brother George, Helen had listened to the words of the Rev. Mr. Slodon, and then, suddenly, something came to her.

Was this really life, this living that Aunt Helen had done? Was this what life meant, ought to mean, amounted to? Born in a house and living in a house and dying in a house and being buried from the house! Was there nothing to life but that? Oughtn't one have Adventure, Freedom, Something? Was life being careful about Family, careful about The Right Thing?

Aunt Helen had lived day after day, stupidly, stuffily, obeying thousands of little conventions started long ago by someone, some place, all of them meaningless. Aunt Helen had felt herself part of a great social system, of which she was one of the importantly chosen few, one who had something to maintain. Yet Helen felt that Aunt Helen

had maintained little enough. She had met the guests at Aunt Helen's teas and her mother's teas—the same groups came to both—and to Helen they had the same correct, striving, pitiful, down-at-the-heel, poor-but-proper look that her mother and Aunt Helen had. This meaningless, unresultful life had been the one that Aunt Helen had lived, without uttering a protest. Her life had been correct, good, formal, unnecessary. Now her funeral was correct, formal, stupid. It wasn't exactly unnecessary, since, after one is dead—

At the vault, the rain oozing squishily into her second-best shoes, her black waist—made over hurriedly from an old one of her mother's by the second girl—scratching her neck, Helen made up her mind that her life would be different. She would do something—she didn't know just what—but something important, real. She couldn't help having been born in the home in West Twelfth Street, but she wouldn't live there, year after year, quietly, properly, a life of correct stupidity; and she wouldn't die there, and never, never would she be buried from there and join the rest of the Fraciers, even quieter than in life, in the Fracier tomb. Something must happen to her. She must see and feel and have wonderful adventures! She must make something happen!

Helen glanced at George. He was scratching one leg with the other and looked bored. She saw him take a piece of chocolate from the pocket of his raincoat, brush off an accumulation of pocket dust with his sleeve and then eat the chocolate slyly, but with evident enjoyment. George, now, what did he know about life? What did her father know, her mother, her grandfather, her Aunt Grace? Couldn't she show them? She was no flaming torch, perhaps, to point the way to their Freedom, but she'd be free herself, anyhow.

The next time Helen went to the cemetery, at her grandfather's funeral, the slab had been engraved and put in. It made her start, when she first saw her own name staring at her. Though, on *her* slab, her parents' names would be different and the dates. She muttered the names to herself and almost laughed, embarrassed. How silly! Yet she even tried to think upan appropriate verse. Her family always used old, simple ones.

Then the Thought surged over her again. They—everything—wouldn't be able to make a puppet out of *her,* like this. She would do things; not great things, of course, but things. She'd know about things, and live. When she died, maybe it would be in the middle of the ocean or in a desert, and they'd bury her in the nearest mirage—Helen thought a mirage was something like an oasis—but, anyhow, it would never, never be here, with the family, uneventful, stupid. Helen was fifteen.

II

In spite of her resolutions, Helen did not break away, suddenly, from the customs of the Fraciers, nor did she make any active efforts to do so. She thought instead. There were quite too many things for a girl of fifteen to break away from. Helen was small for her age, and slender, with light, indefinite hair and a pointed, proud chin, "the Boudinot chin." She had pleasant, large, light grey eyes. She was not the type that usually means revolution.

The family home in West Twelfth Street was not an unpleasant place to spend a childhood, nor were the Fraciers unpleasant people. Mrs. Fracier was a rather large woman, with light, fluffy hair, beginning to turn grey, though you couldn't tell which was the light and which the grey part. Her eyebrows were light and too high, and she pencilled them, so that they gave her rather flabby face the expression of perpetual astonishment. But, as Mrs. Fracier had been a Corman in her youth and had been a Fracier now for some years—these names represented almost the entire universe to her—there were few things which caused her any surprise.

Phillip Fracier was a thin, dark-

haired man with a sallow face and a small mustache, qute tall, but inclined to be stoop-shouldered. He was a lawyer, as his father and grandfather had been before him, and went daily to the law office of Douglas, Erman, Douglas, Fracier and Skelton, a firm he had consented to join some ten years before, when he found that his own personality, even coupled with the name of Fracier, was not quite enough to draw for him a reasonable clientèle.

George, the last member of the family, was thirteen, an indefinite, pleasant boy, with round eyes, inclined to be stout like his mother, and who spoiled his stomach frequently by overeating.

The Fraciers were the last members of an old New York family. Mr. and Mrs. Fracier believed that old families like theirs were set apart, unapproachable. They owned a little property, a small country house, the West Twelfth Street home and a narrow lot further south, containing two stables which were rented as studios. Helen's parents believed that they and a very few more of the old families meant New York society. They sneered at the expression "four hundred," and knew that there could not be half that many people worth knowing. No one they did not know could be worth knowing. The mere possession of money, to them, indicated the climber. And people who possessed neither money nor family were non-existent.

Both sides of the family had, generations ago, owned much property in the city, but it had been sold long before it became valuable. They liked to talk this over now and discuss how immensely wealthy they would have been if their ancestors had had the good taste and foresight to have kept it. The site where a certain immense, glittering hotel now stood had belonged to the Fraciers and had been sold for "just think of it, two thousand dollars. If we had it now—!" They could never pass this hotel without feeling that, in some way, the owner of it had personally cheated the present-day Fraciers and that he ought to be told to get out so that the Fraciers could take rightful possession.

The Fraciers believed, along with the rest of their set, that all New York desired the privilege of associating with them. They believed they represented, exclusively, Real Society, Real American Society, that is. Without them there would be no possible society on This Side at all. They admitted the existence of a few people worth knowing in Europe. Ignoring families both old and rich, they thought that all those who had made money within the last two generations were making every possible effort to get inside their ancestral portals.

The Fraciers never even wondered at their own dearth of invitations. They looked down on everyone. They took it for granted that they were unapproachable, unassailable, but most desirable. They were poor and lived on in the Twelfth Street house, with its threadbare finery, its red velvet hangings, believing calmly in their superiority.

The ménage consisted of an old cook, Mrs. Clinton, who prepared unextravagant though not especially well-seasoned viands; and Bridge, the butler, who was married to the second girl and lived on the fourth floor and entertained some very nice friends in the fourth floor front, which he had made into a sort of a living-room. Bridge and the second girl cleaned the house, and Mrs. Clinton, who lived in Tenth Street and went home nights, helped Mrs. Bridge, whose Christian and working name was Evelyn, with the washing. There had been another girl, whom Mrs. Fracier called "my maid," but she had proved too expensive. The details of the ménage were never whispered outside the family. At least there were three servants!

There was a horse and carriage until the automobile replaced them. There had been much discussion about adding the automobile. It was so modern and vulgar. If they could have afforded a new carriage, really good horses and two men up, they would never have

considered anything else. The car was second-hand, of foreign make and rather complicated appearance, driven sometimes by a chauffeur, but usually by the obliging Bridge. There was only one uniform, so, in hiring a chauffeur, when she felt the family dignity cry out for it, Mrs. Fracier had to take physical qualities even more than mechanical ones into consideration.

Helen spent most of her time reading in the living-room. It was rather a formal room, and dark. The furniture was colonial, a mixture of good mahogany pieces which showed Georgian influence, and pieces which unfortunately followed the lines of the Empire. Heavy red velvet curtains, edged with tarnished gilt braid, hung to the floor on each side of the long front windows, with shaped curtain boxes, velvet covered, above them. The walls were covered with a faded floral paper and hung with large, poorly done oils of Fraciers of other days. Helen liked the living-room, for she was not often disturbed there. There were few callers. Back of this was the library, an even darker room, containing a huge secretary and built-in bookshelves full of numerous "sets" bound in tan calfskin. Back of that—the house was long and narrow—came the dining-room, with a huge square table and a chandelier of tinkling glass. The kitchen was in the basement and was always too damply warm and smelled of generations of dinners.

Helen's own room was the back room on the second floor. It was furnished in cherry, and an attempt to lighten it had been made by adding some impossible chintzes, bought in remnant lengths at a sale and sewed up in wrong places. It looked out on a very nice old home in Eleventh Street, which was usually unoccupied. George had the back room on the third floor. Here, too, were the guest rooms. The front room on this floor had been Aunt Helen's. She had liked it because it was light and quiet.

Tea was served each day, either in the living-room or in Mrs. Fracier's room on the second floor. Usually it was, literally, just tea, sometimes accompanied by thin slices of bread and butter and not very well-made jam. For company, there were tiny sandwiches, filled with tasteless mixtures and little too-soft or too-hard cakes, in limited quantities. The company consisted of representatives of other old families, all in the same financial condition as the Fraciers, with the exception of Aunt Grace.

Grace was now Philip Fracier's only sister. At school she had met Laura Willerton, "the" Laura Willerton of *Town Topics* and Sunday feature section fame. Laura had liked her and introduced her into the society of much money—the Fraciers had felt that Grace was rather associating with the rabble. Grace, at nineteen, to the horror of the Fraciers, had married Joseph Personby, and now lived rather ostentatiously in Park Avenue in the Winter and in the Berkshires in Summer. She associated with those whom the Fraciers deplored as vulgarly rich, but apparently did not regret her choice, though it was not thought possible, even by those who knew her best, that she really could like Joseph Personby.

III

HELEN attended an old and extremely private school, which the family could ill afford. There she learned about half as much as a more conveniently located public school would hve taught her. She learned to speak French rather nicely, even though the Fraciers could not afford private tutors. On Thursdays, after school, and followed by Evelyn carrying her slipper bag, Helen went to dancing school. She sat with a long row of girls, near the wall, usually, and the boys danced with her only when prompted by the dancing master. George, under the excuse that he "must mix with the world as he grows older," went to the public school and rather gladly chummed with a group of seldom-washed Italian boys

of generous and cheerful dispositions.

Helen's days were much alike. She went to school at nine, after eating a plain breakfast, and returned home at three, occasionally bringing a school acquaintance with her. This, however, was frowned on. Mrs. Fracier felt that all acquaintances picked up indiscriminately at school were scheming climbers, taking this method to break into the sacred circle in which the Fraciers occupied such a prominent place. Sometimes Helen went to visit the homes of other little girls. As this, too, was frowned on, and as Helen had neither the clothes nor the gayety to fit into the set where money, alas, had such an exaggerated position, and, as the other homes, both those of real climbers and those of presuming gentility, offered no special allure, she preferred reading at home.

Sometimes Helen took walks on Saturdays and after school, going only as far south as Washington Square, but quite far north. Mrs. Fracier felt that, as a daughter of the Fraciers, Helen ought to ride in the park, discreetly followed by a groom, or take her walks accompanied by a chaperone. But, as the family could not afford to own nor even to rent horses, and as the Bridges and Mrs. Clinton had their time well occupied, Helen walked alone. To Helen these walks meant a great deal. They were her one chance of mingling with life as she saw it. She passed the wholesale houses in lower Fifth Avenue, peered up dusty stairways and looked curiously at errand girls and boys her own age, at everyone. In Washington Square, she talked, sometimes, to Italian mothers, to girls and boys. The conversations were short, rather meaningless, as Helen had to start them, and never knew how to keep them up and the people she talked to were not interested. She never knew what to say and she was too colorless to attract or hold attention.

Dinner was at seven, and here there was an attempt at formality. That is, Bridge stood in solemn and silent grandeur and the family forgot the un-butlerlike duties he had performed since the dinner of yesterday. Mr. Fracier said grace, and the meat portions were small.

After dinner Helen went back to the library. She read a great deal. Her reading consisted of swallowing whole sets of books, Voltaire, Shakespeare, Schopenhauer, Fiske, novels of another age, forgotten poets. Her mother thought it beneath the dignity of a Fracier to visit the public library and thus admit to a curious world that the Fraciers could not buy all the books they desired. Few magazines were admitted into the house, partly because Mr. and Mrs. Fracier believed that modern fiction was necessarily bad because it was new—unknown, shoddy writers, you know—and partly because they could not afford them.

They took *Littell's Living Age* and were glad that one magazine printed material of a class high enough to gain admittance into their home. They were among the few who still read the New York *Sun* and felt pleased that it was still published. In later years Mr. Fracier was persuaded to subscribe for the *New Republic,* feeling that it gave him the profoundest opinions of America's younger intelligentsia and kept him in close touch with all new movements in the higher thought of the republic. Except for her walks, in which she glimpsed a little of the real world, Helen was absolutely out of touch with everything that had happened in a hundred years. Yet she desired, almost frantically, to be alive.

In Summer the Fraciers went to "the country house" in Westchester County. It was a tumble-down farm house that had been kept in the family because there had never been any offers for it. The Bridges, who didn't like the country, stayed in town and took care of the "town house." Mr. Fracier could only afford commuting on occasional week-ends.

So Helen lived quietly, as her mother had lived when a girl in a similar house, four blocks away, and as her Aunt Helen had done in this very house.

When she was nineteen she was graduated from her private school. She was not very tall, and quite slender. Her fair hair and smooth skin and large light grey eyes gave her a sweet, gentle appearance. She didn't have much energy, and sometimes, after a long walk or a day of unusual activity, she was quite tired.

Her mother and father and George and four family friends attended her graduation exercises and smiled serenely when she accepted the blue-ribbon-tied diploma. Then they went to the Fracier home for dinner and drank to Helen's health in indifferent wine, whose virtue lay in the fact that it had reclined at the proper angle for many years in one of the almost empty racks of the "wine cellar," a bit of the basement partitioned off from the winter's supply of coal and Mrs. Clinton's jams.

There was talk, after that, about a proper "finishing" for Helen. She, herself, suggested a girls' college or maybe a university, but these suggestions were hastily frowned on. Finally, after much figuring on the back of an envelope that had contained the gas bill, Mr. and Mrs. Fracier concluded that a trip to Europe was the only possible thing.

Helen was excited about it. Something was happening at last! Europe! Whole volumes of romance spread out before her. She even took an interest in getting her clothes ready. Her two-year-old blue suit was dyed black, and a dark brown cape, belonging to some long-dead Fracier, was, with the addition of a yard of brown plaid, made into a traveling coat. With the help of a Miss Tussy, who charged a dollar and a half a day, though you had to send her her luncheon to the sewing-room, too—there were those who invited her into the dining-room with them, but they were not Fraciers—Helen was all ready for the trip when the time came.

IV

She sailed on July fifteenth. Her parents went to the pier with her. Here she met her "party." It was in charge of a Miss Perry and a Mr. Botts. Miss Perry was a woman of about forty, with an assumed, pert cheerfulness. Mr. Botts was about the same age, rather condescending and sarcastic. The "party" consisted of about forty women, four of about Helen's age, also being "finished," the others inclined to school-teacher dispositions and middle age, and determined to be thoroughly and quickly cultured.

The first two days out, Helen enjoyed the trip. She liked investigating the decks and the salons and she liked the little stateroom which she shared with two of the "party," both past thirty. The third day out there was a rough sea on, and for the rest of the trip Helen was quite ill.

They arrived in Liverpool on a Thursday and made hurried trips to "the historical points of interest in England," accompanied by Miss Perry and her lectures, which Miss Perry considered "sparkling."

Helen was disappointed in being one of such a party. She didn't like being stared at. She knew how secretly amused she always was when the rubberneck wagons passed her on Fifth Avenue. This was neither seeing nor living. She would have liked being alone, staying leisurely at a quiet little inn in Devonshire, walking down funny little lanes. She did not know how to get out of being one of the party. The trip was paid for. She had no money. So she saw Europe as it was shown to her—second-class hotels, squints at much-visited museums, famous streets, hurriedly reviewed public buildings. The things she liked—little odd streets, the people themselves—she did not see at all.

Helen returned to New York on September 15, 1905, as had been scheduled. She brought back with her a distorted mass of facts culled from Miss Perry's chats, a disheveled memory of certain high points of England, France, Germany and Italy.

The family were back in town to welcome her. Her mother was glad

that they had been able to give her "the opportunity for foreign travel," though regretting that she could not be sent abroad every year, as befitted a Fracier. Helen saw, with great stabs of conscience, that her mother had made over some almost thoroughly worn out clothes, that her father did not have his annual new suit, that even George looked shabby. She could not say anything. She had not planned the trip nor even thought it possible. Her parents had enjoyed being able to give it to her.

Life continued the same, save that there was no more school. Helen did not feel free nor that she was really alive. She didn't know exactly what to do.

In December she made her début, at an evening reception at home. Helen knew that her parents were spending money for this that they could not afford, and she protested. After all, what difference did it make, having people in—a party? Her parents frowned on her. There was a great deal of difference, it seemed. She did not understand.

Helen had a new dress, an attractive one, the gift of her Aunt Grace. It was white, trimmed with tiny bands of blue and quite becoming. There was music behind potted plants and a late supper, served by a caterer whose name had stood for supremacy in catering in 1882.

Helen had been excited over the party because she felt she might meet some really interesting people, young men, perhaps, who might call—and flirt—and take her places, even. The guests arrived at ten. Even to Helen, accustomed to overlooking a great deal, the evening clothes of the men were greyed and shabby—and the clothes of the women—Helen knew when things had been turned, and once-elegant laces and silks.

Most of the guests Helen had met before, middle-aged and old beaux, women with thin voices and high-bred, worn-looking faces. There were a few young people, but they were languid, subdued. One young girl, with much-rouged cheeks and a high, insolent laugh, was the only one who looked modern. Later, Mrs. Fracier spoke of "the terrible Van Trotter girl—her mother was a Farrington—and this girl—they say she has been on the stage."

One young man interested Helen. His name was Horace Bellington. He was slender and pale and tall. Helen sat in the bay window of the library with him for a little while and he told her about himself. From the things he said—and didn't say—Helen knew that he was like her—the last of an old family, with not quite enough energy to succeed, but with a great, indistinct longing to do things. His mother was dead. She had been a Southerner, a Breckenridge, so he had spent one year at the Virginia Military Academy and two years at the University of Virginia. He had no profession, but he was going to read law in the office of friends of his father. He was twenty-one. He asked permission to call.

Helen had made her début. It became a memory. The days passed. Helen wished that there was something exciting—different—that she could do.

V

She continued her walks. One day, in a little odd bookshop, she heard two girls talking wildly, enthusiastically, about art and the successful artists they knew. Art, it seemed, was the big thing that mattered. Helen never saw the girls again, but she remembered their talk. At school she had made rather clever little sketches, and she knew how interested she had been in the pictures she had seen in Europe.

One night at dinner, rather hesitatingly, Helen spoke to her parents about it. As usual, they promised to "think it over." Two weeks later, Helen found that she was to become a student in one of the art schools, that her parents were pleased that she had "found such a suit-

able career," and hoped she would "progress admirably in her studies."

To Helen the art school seemed to offer a real avenue to freedom. She had read many books about art and the fascination of studying art and the life of art students and artists. The talk of the two girls had added to her enthusiasm. She thought she would meet an odd crowd of wonderful people, would become one of a coterie devoted to a freer life, though she didn't know just what it could be.

At the art school Helen found a group of busy, earnest young people, mostly from small Western towns or from middle-class New York homes. There were shirkers, of course, but they shirked by staying away from school. If there was any of the free life she longed for, Helen did not find it. She was in the beginners' charcoal class, and worked, hour after hour, at a big drawing board with charcoal which had a way of breaking off annoyingly as she tried to draw the big plaster casts. She couldn't even learn how to make smooth drawings.

Helen worked all morning at her easel, ate an inexpensive lunch at a near-by lunch room and, in the afternoon, attended lectures and a sketching class. After the first few weeks, she found she was in a rut as deep as the one she had been in at school. Outside of a few acquaintances who said "good morning" and "what do you think of Professor Randolph's criticisms?" she knew no one. She passed nice-looking young men in the hall and tried to smile at them. Usually they smiled, quite friendly, in return. No one tried to talk to her.

If she had shown any talent—

But, of course, she didn't. Before she had spent a year at art school, Helen knew that her work would always be mediocre. She didn't "see" things. In the afternoon she did dauby bits of color work. In the morning she drew, laboriously, uninspiredly, from the casts or from models. Her teachers, after the first months, gave her only brief routine criticisms and then ignored her altogether. Her work was not bad enough to cause ridicule. It was just nothing at all.

From the talks at home, Helen knew that her parents felt that, in some way, a year or, at most, a year and a half at an art school would give her a profession. They would have been horrified at any suggestion that she go to work—though there was nothing she could have done, she was not strong and entirely untrained—but they believed that, in some way, she might be metamorphosed into an artist and bring credit, wealth and fame to all of them. Didn't she have Corman, Boudinot and Fracier blood?

At the end of the long year at art school, Helen realized that to succeed, even in a most mediocre way, meant money and many years of hard, painstaking work. She told her parents, in the best way she could, that she wanted to stop work at the art school, that there was no use wasting time and money at it. They were a little grieved and did not quite understand—they had expected so much—but they did not protest. Perhaps George, now—

They spent the summer, as usual, at "the country house." Helen was tired after her winter's work and enjoyed resting. After their return, George, who had never been very strong, took seriously ill with some obscure stomach trouble, the result, apparently, of overeating in a cheap restaurant, where he had gone with a group of boys to celebrate a football victory. A week later George died, at the age of nineteen.

Helen grieved a great deal for George. After all, he had been the one really young friend she had. Now she was twenty-one and seemed so much alone. At the funeral, in the midst of her tears, she remembered the funeral of Aunt Helen. Again the surge, the wanting of freedom, came over her. Here George was dead and he had never really lived at all. Later, when the slab that told George's brief history was in place, with its inscription starting:

GEORGE CORMAN OGDEN FRACIER

and ending:

Blessed are the pure in heart

Helen felt the revolt more than ever. She wouldn't stand this. Here she was, grown up, twenty-one, and she, too, had never lived. Born in the house in Twelfth Street, school, a brief, tiresome trip to Europe, a failure at art, still living in the house in Twelfth Street—something must be done! She would succeed or at least feel things and live.

That Winter the family was in mourning for George and did not go out at all. Helen sneaked in at the public library and brought home books to read. The books made a pleasant Winter for her. A few of the old friends called. Nothing happened. Helen was twenty-two. Another Summer passed.

One day of the next Winter, Helen met Horace Bellington near Washington Square. They were rather glad to see each other. Horace said that he had often thought of calling, but that—he stammered. He had just forgotten. Helen didn't know what to say. Horace walked home with her. He called once every two or three weeks after that, during the Winter. He took her to several receptions given by mutual friends, and to concerts. Outside of a few elderly men, he was Helen's only caller and it was quite an event each time she saw him.

When he took her places, Horace called in the family car. It resembled the Fracier car in many ways. Horace wore rather poorly fitting evening clothes, which, to Helen, showed unmistakable signs of having been made over.

Horace's childhood had been much like Helen's, except that his Southern mother—her family had been wealthy before the Civil War—had died when he was thirteen. He and his father lived alone in the family home in Fourth Street. There was one servant. He and his father both referred to the servant as "my man."

Horace was reading law now, but he didn't find it very inspiring. He was quite poor. It would be two or three years before he could pass the bar examination, and then he would have to start in at a tiny salary. If things had been different; if there had been any money, Horace would probably have asked Helen to marry him. As it was, they wondered together about life and asked why they had been left out of the current of things, without the energy or the ability or the talent to step into it. They watched life go by and longed desperately to have it stop and wait for them.

VI

THE Winter that Helen was twenty-four, Helen's parents, without consulting her, asked Aunt Grace to "do something for Helen." They felt that, though charming and a Fracier, on account of the importance that the modern world placed upon money, she lacked the proper setting. They wanted her to marry well, to take the position in the social world that was hers by right. Aunt Grace promised to ask Helen to share some of her social life with her.

Aunt Grace was not especially interested in Helen. She found nothing in common with the sweet, calm, pale little thing who happened to be her niece. She, herself, had found few enough advantages in being a Fracier. Even being married to a few millions of dollars did not mean an entrance into Real Society as she had found it. Aunt Grace had long since stopped laughing at the attitude of her brother and sister-in-law—that she had married a man lower in the social scale than a Fracier should. She had the Fraciers to dinner, occasionally. She had given Helen her début dress and a trifle or two since, but she had hardly realized that the child had grown up, though she had been informed, frequently, of the trip to Europe and the art career.

Grace realized, too, what a real struggle the Fraciers had gone through before they had approached her about Helen. She knew that the girl had had

few opportunities to meet people, though she did not realize how extremely limited the Fracier social circle was. She knew there was little money.

So Helen received a note, saying that Aunt Grace would call and they would go shopping together, prior to more interesting things. Helen felt that at last life, everything, had come to her. She held out her arms to it.

Helen would never have been allowed to receive gifts of clothes from anyone else, of course. Even Aunt Grace's careless offer, when Helen was a little girl, that she be allowed to send to Helen things that she had worn only a few times so that they could be remodeled into school clothes had been coolly refused, though Helen had never had enough clothes. But new things—somehow that was different now.

Her aunt arrived in the newest Personby limousine. After one careless glance at her niece, clad in the Fracier attempt at quiet decency, Aunt Grace gave her chauffeur his orders. She and Helen spent four hours in enameled, rose shaded shops, which Helen had longed so many times to enter as she had walked up Fifth Avenue or passed them with her mother in the uncertain Fracier car. Helen felt that she had left her little grey cocoon forever behind her. She found herself the possessor of a dark tailored suit, simple furs, hats, an afternoon frock of dull bronze green, two evening frocks, one pink, one cream, an evening coat of rose velvet and shoes for all of them.

Helen tried many times to thank her aunt. Years of repression kept her from showing how grateful she was. She did manage to convey to her aunt that these were more clothes than she had ever had in her whole life and that she was quite pleased with them.

The first affair her aunt invited her to was a dinner, one from which a débutante, invited to something more attractive, had escaped at the last minute. Helen, in the new cream frock, went in with a tall, stolid-looking man, who couldn't or wouldn't talk but ate all of everything that was served to him. On the other side sat another eater who spoke, occasionally, of a book he was reading. It was on taxation and evidently important. He spoke of it eight times. Helen had never heard of the book, knew nothing about taxation and little more about dinner conversation. She didn't know any of the women. There were two débutantes who afterwards chirped together about mysterious secrets and a few other men and women who looked vaguely alike. Helen sat quietly, alone, and smiled and answered when spoken to.

The next affair was a little better. It was another dinner, almost a "home" dinner, with only three other guests, two "Waters boys," who were interested in amateur theatricals and a girl who painted. Aunt Grace was having them because sometimes they were useful to her. She did not invite Helen to her smartest affairs. Being kind to Helen was one thing; allowing her to interfere in any way with a social campaign was another. Helen was a nice little thing, well brought up and pretty, but, after all, people had heard only vaguely of the Fraciers, and Helen had neither money nor great attractiveness. At the second dinner the conversation was general and Helen could laugh at things. She sat next to Uncle Joseph and, for the first time in her life, was not frightened at his loud laugh and odd sense of humor. They even found a faint liking for one another.

Then there were three charity things, two in the afternoon. Aunt Grace called for Helen and brought her home and chatted with her and Helen tried to think of nice things to say. If she could only feel that Aunt Grace was really interested in her!

VII

A FEW weeks later, at Aunt Grace's again, Helen met Robinson Brocker. He was a tall man with thinning black hair, a sharp nose and even sharper eyes. Helen went into dinner with him and found herself listening to tales about the stock exchange. She was a

good listener. After dinner, she found herself listening again. Later, she found she was to be one in a theater party Brocker was giving the following Tuesday.

As she was leaving, her aunt whispered: "My dear, I'm absolutely delighted. You've made a great hit with Robinson Brocker. I'll telephone you in the morning."

For the first time, her aunt telephoned her. Hitherto, her maid had conveyed Aunt Grace's messages. Aunt Grace told Helen that Robinson Brocker was terribly, oh, immensely rich—all kinds of money. Oh, of no family, but he managed to get to a great many places. He was a bachelor.

After the theater party there was an elaborate dinner given by Brocker in his apartment, a huge, over-decorated place, crowded with furniture made slightly after that of the Italian Renaissance, a dinner by a vague person named Mrs. Halloway, and then more things. Helen felt bewildered. She hardly realized that she had been given four dinner frocks and new afternoon things. The house in Twelfth street seemed only a place at which to sleep and dress—from which to fly. Nice Horace Bellington could be seen only infrequently. And then—Robinson Brocker asked Helen to marry him.

Helen couldn't believe this at all. She hadn't spoken fifty words to him, it seemed. She had just listened, not very much interested. She had absolutely nothing in common with him. He never read any thing but the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Times* and never thought about any of the things she did. He knew only that she was pretty and quiet and belonged to a good old family. He was interested in the stock market.

Helen stammered something and told him she'd think about it. When she told her father and mother, at breakfast, she realized, with a shock, that they were waiting for something like this of her. They had talked things over and realizing that the small family income was dwindling—some stock had become worthless, the studios had needed repairs; they had concluded that pride must be swallowed, that something besides family was necessary. In some indefinite, uncertain, never-thought-out way Helen was to rescue the family from this undeserved fog into which it had fallen. Of course matrimony was simplest. She was Helen Céleste Boudinot Fracier—the last one.

Her parents said nothing definite. They had never said anything definite.

"If you met the gentleman at your aunt's home, I'm sure he must be an excellent man," said her mother, preferring conveniently to ignore the things she had said on previous occasions about her sister-in-law's social position and acquaintances.

"Your own heart must decide," said her father.

There was a little talk about family, about the dignity of being a Fracier. There was an uncertain, vague mention of wealth—how much could be done with it. That was all.

Brocker had told Aunt Grace of the proposal. She was very good to her niece, now. The marriage would make Helen more than her equal, financially and socially—well, Brocker could get ahead, too.

And then there came over Helen, quite suddenly and yet as if it had been there always, the knowledge that she could never marry Brocker. How could she? He was a stranger to her—another kind of a person. There was nothing there, not even friendship. After all, she was a Fracier. But, first of all, she was herself. If he should even touch her. . . .

She wrote a polite little note, on paper with the Fracier crest—paper that had laid in the secretary in the library a long time, the edges were yellow and it nearly cracked as she folded it for the envelope—telling Brocker that she appreciated the honor of his proposal but that she could not marry him.

Helen's parents were calm and indefinite when she told them. Mrs. Fracier had made plans that included new bath rooms—and new draperies as a better background for the lovely old

Fracier mahogany. But she didn't say anything. There would be something else.

Aunt Grace was astonished, furiously angry, then unbelieving, then questioning. There was no one else? Helen hadn't taken an actual dislike to Brocker? She surely didn't have—higher ambitions.

Aunt Grace tried to point out some of the advantages of a wealthy marriage, tried to persuade her niece. She refuse to believe that anyone as unsought, as unattractive as Helen could refuse Brocker. To her, Brocker's attentions had seemed a wonderful piece of luck. She had taken a great deal of credit for what she had done for her niece. And now—Helen—

VIII

AFTER that, Aunt Grace stopped most of her attempts at being good to Helen, stopped gradually, of course, but it was understood that she had done more than her share. And yet, afterwards, in conversation with her niece, a new element entered in. She was not the equal, the comrade, the adviser, she would have been if Helen had married Brocker. She treated Helen more as if she were fragile—precious. Was there respect—and an underlying admiration in Aunt Grace's attitude?

Helen never thought about it. For, at a studio tea her Aunt had taken her to, she met Earl Fredericks.

Earl Fredericks was a musician. To some he might have seemed cheap, climbing. He wore his hair nicely trimmed and yet he was the long-haired type. His collars were high and yet his chiseled features made you think of flowing ties. He had a lot of rather light hair which he parted near the middle and very long fingers. He had effeminate mannerisms.

To Helen, Earl Fredericks represented, at once, all of the things the other men she had met had never done. He was the hero of all the books she had read. He seemed almost too handsome to be real. She admired his slow smile, his poses. It was a sudden, dulling infatuation.

Earl had come from a small Ohio town. His people were shiftless, no one in particular. He had developed a gift for music and had made enough money by playing at cheap dances to take lessons. Then he had come to New York, had met a crowd of pseudo-artists, hangers-on, had learned to pose and flatter and received, occasionally, desirable invitations. He was cool, ambitious, clever. He felt that he was working his way up, socially and professionally. He played the viola in the Metropolitan orchestra now and wrote music in his spare time and had ideas about being a director or a composer.

Helen didn't know how to hide her infatuation for him, even if she had tried. She didn't try very hard. Earl Fredericks couldn't help noticing her, slim and pale and beautifully gowned. He found she was the niece of Mrs. Joseph Personby—and he read the Sunday papers. It seemed a step ahead. He "rushed" Helen as much as his slender purse would permit. After a hint from Helen, Aunt Grace invited him to a couple of dinners on the "off" nights. She never guessed that her niece was serious in her admiration for the young musician, after having refused Brocker.

Helen allowed Earl to call whenever he asked. She went places with him—he was invited to a few nice homes—and he took her to amusing studio parties and to the theater when he could get professional recognition.

Earl thought, of course, that Helen was rich. He knew that she was always well-gowned. He had been told that the Fraciers were "an old family." He was greatly impressed by the Personby home, the furnishings, the service, the people he met there, and even by the Twelfth Street house, the formality, the worn hangings, Bridge at the door.

When Earl asked Helen to marry him, she accepted as eagerly as she had accepted knowing him. He seemed a sort of Heaven-sent gift. To question

anything concerning him seemed wrong. She knew he had talent, ambition. She did not ask about his future, his career, his family. She had heard him play, little improvised things, rather good music, and popular stuff, too. All of it moved her. She thought him attractive, wonderful.

Helen had felt, a year or so before, that if Horace Bellington were financially able, she would marry him, if he asked her. They had the same gentleness, the same inherited qualities, the same bringing-up. She did not know that they were too nearly alike—the last of two decadent families—to marry. She only knew that she had liked him a great deal.

This was different. This was blinding, beautiful. Just as Helen had never been quite herself since Aunt Grace started "doing things" for her, she was not herself now. The world seemed whirling about. She never got alone with herself long enough to think things out. The months of quiet, of reading, of walks, seemed to belong to a past world. Now there was just Earl Fredericks.

Earl suggested eloping. He dreaded a family consultation. From his occasional meetings with Helen's parents, he had gained the impression that they were extremely calm, conservative and reserved. He had met Joseph Personby only once and was afraid of him. He had all of the mid-West reverence for "old families," formality and position. He thought he was doing exceptionally well for himself.

Helen packed a few things into a bag, hardly knowing what she put into it, wrote a rather incoherent note to her mother and met Earl in Washington Square one Tuesday at ten o'clock. Earl had procured a license. They were married by a clergyman of the church Helen attended. That much she had insisted on. Though she was not religious—the Fraciers rather looked down on anyone who was enthusiastic about anything—she would not have felt really married, otherwise. The service was over and she was Mrs. Earl Fredericks before she realized it. It seemed too splendid to have happened to her. She was married to Earl!

They went to Earl's apartment. The apartment was in Eighth Street. Until a week before, another musician had shared it with him. It was tiny and rented furnished. It consisted of a "studio" with a tiny piano and rickety chairs, a flimsy kitchenette, a small bedroom with an airshaft window and a bathroom, the tin tub partly retaining a coat of white enamel, applied by some earlier, sanitarily inclined tenant.

Helen knew nothing about housekeeping or cooking. She had never been strong nor energetic. She had never wanted to know about things like these nor been even slightly interested in anything domestic. There had always been someone to do things for her. The Fraciers had always taken it for granted that there always would be. Now she found herself married to a musician, in a two-room apartment, trying to keep house on very little a week. Helen had never known costs, kitchen methods, any of the dozens of things that the women Earl had known had grasped almost instinctively.

It was a few weeks before Earl learned that his bride was as poor as he. In that time, Helen found out that her parents forgave her and that she could come home—but they did not want to see Earl. Aunt Grace, in disgust, had washed her hands of all of them.

Earl lost patience with Helen's ineffectual household efforts. He was practical and scheming in spite of his music, in matters both large and small. He hoped great things for himself. Just now, he didn't want to pay three times as much as raw materials cost, in order to eat in restaurants. He couldn't understand why Helen couldn't cook—that she was simply inadequate—the useless last member of a worn-out family. He thought her lazy, stupid. He felt that she had tricked him into matrimony. He saw what he had done—and he had planned to do so well! In Ohio, he could have married far above

his family—a local physician's daughter who lived in a big house and had money. He had decided to come to New York, make a name for himself, marry rich. Here, he found himself tied to a slim, rather faded little thing who could never help him in any way, who wasn't even attractive or entertaining and who had neither money nor good horse sense.

Earl introduced Helen to his real, professional friends. She was quiet, he thought, almost rude. She had no idea how to talk to "professionals." She couldn't enter into the spirit of anything.

Helen grew paler, frightened, worried. She was beginning to see through the glamour of her affections. She was starting to come back to herself. It was as if she were waking up—slowly—from a dream in which she had done unaccountable things. The dream had begun the day Aunt Grace had called for her in the new car. Now she was trying to wake up—and found she was married to a cross, sullen blond boy, living in a house almost as old and far less agreeable than her home in Twelfth Street, trying to cook meals she didn't in the least understand. This wasn't doing any of the things she had wanted to do. This wasn't life—freedom. She longed for peace and home, for Bridge and Evelyn and her own little room, for long walks to the library and even for calls from Horace Bellington.

Helen and Earl started to quarrel over little things. Helen didn't understand everyday things very well. She had been too sheltered, serene, untroubled. She didn't know how to do things—not even how to quarrel satisfactorily.

Earl lost his position in the orchestra. Then he spent both the days and the evenings at home, playing, playing, playing on the cheap piano and on the sardonic viola, until Helen's head ached so she could hardly answer when he spoke to her. They both lost their tempers unnecessarily every day.

Earl couldn't get a berth. He was ambitious and had hoped that through marriage or "pull" he might be able to go from his orchestra position to something where his individuality would be appreciated. Now, because of a quarrel in which he had said something almost insulting—he had quite a wit for ugliness—he was without any position at all, and had a wife on his hands. He became whiney and told Helen over and over again that she had ruined his career.

She didn't know much about careers. She knew she had never had a career. But she had had her dreams, too, even if they had been vague, undeveloped ones and Earl hadn't added much to her happiness. She felt guilty, though, about her responsibility for the marriage. Perhaps, after all, she had, unconsciously, deceived Earl about herself. She hadn't tried to pretend anything. But, she felt she had been the one who caused the marriage. She had pursued. She was the one to blame.

Earl got a position, finally, the only one he could find, as musical director of a road show, a musical comedy that had succeeded for two years in New York. Last year it had been on the road and played the larger cities. Now, several companies were being put out for one-night stands. Earl looked forward to the experience. It was different from anything he had done and might lead to something good. He had heard of a lot of men, directors and producers, who had got their start with road shows. He suggested that Helen stay behind, that she live at home. He was tired of matrimony. Helen wanted to try to find a little of the happiness that she had thought she was going to have when she married and she believed it was her duty to stay with her husband. The idea of travelling with a theatrical company seemed indefinitely romantic to her.

IX

THE company left New York on a rainy day in October. The streets were dark, littered with bits of dirty paper,

brown, wet leaves. Earl let Helen carry her own bag and told her it was "professional."

Helen met the company for the first time at the station. Earl had been rehearsing with them for several weeks and it seemed to Helen he was remarkably easy and intimate with them. She seemed more of an outsider than she had ever felt with him. Helen found the usual travelling musical comedy company—a conceited soprano, lead, a fat and over-dressed tenor, a little old comedian, chorus girls just past the first company's requirements for youth and beauty. They seemed to her tawdry, cheap, loud. She had nothing to say to any of them.

The road, then, weeks of one-night stands. Helen hadn't even the excitement of making up, of going through the performance. She usually sat out in front, near the back of the house, or stayed around the wings. After the first few weeks of seeing new things, she grew to hate the cheap hotels, the staring people in the lobbies, the cold rooms.

The third month out, one of the chorus girls fell ill and left the show. Helen asked for a chance to take her place. It would mean eighteen dollars a week—she wouldn't have to be dependent on Earl for her hotel bills—and something to do. She was given an opportunity and was quite nervous and excited about it. She was slow in learning to dance and the girls hated the extra rehearsals and were impatient and cross. Finally, she did learn and went on. Earl did not object. He was tired of her now, and indifferent. He even stopped quarrelling.

Helen was a member of the chorus! She thought of it and shuddered, as night after night, in a different but always inconvenient dressing room, she listened to and joined in quarrels with the other girls about the hooks for costumes, about borrowed make-up, about everything. She—a Fracier—almost the last Fracier! Where were the golden dreams now?

She didn't dare tell her parents. Fraciers didn't do things like that—that was all. It was impossible. Helen wrote, occasionally, to her mother. She said that Earl was with a musical organization, that she was travelling with him, that the country they were travelling through was very pretty and interesting. She enclosed her route. Each answer from her mother—her father never wrote—was like being pinched into consciousness when you are half asleep. The thick, crested paper seemed to thrust itself out at her as she passed the mail box in the stage entrance.

Helen caught cold in the wings—there were many drafts. In the poorly constructed country hotels and the wings of other theaters she found it hard to get rid of her cough. She had difficulty in keeping from coughing during the dances and she never felt quite warm enough.

It came to her, quite suddenly, that Earl was being very attentive to Eloise Clinton, the leading lady, brunette, plump, talkative. With the knowledge came the meaning of the hints and winks the girls had given her. With it also came the feeling of how hateful the whole thing, life, was. She didn't know what to do.

One morning, at four, Helen awoke. Earl was just coming into the room. She accused him of having been with Eloise Clinton and he laughed. She said something else and Earl hit her. And she was a Fracier—and a chorus girl married to a cheap, trifling musical director in a one-night-stand show!

She got up and dressed and packed her bag. Earl thought it was all part of her pretense, that she was too fond of him to leave, though he would have been glad enough, had he known the truth, and taunted her. She found herself at the station, with a wet ball of a handkerchief in one hand, her heavy bag in the other. She had never bought a railway ticket. She had never taken a trip alone. She had travelled enough, though, the last few months, to know what to do.

X

HELEN got home two days later. The Fraciers welcomed her calmly, with a sad sort of dignity that hid varied emotions.

She told her father about things. After all, he was a lawyer. He got a divorce for her a few months later—and the restoration of her maiden name. It had been easy enough to do. She was Helen Céleste Boudinot Fracier again!

Helen stepped again into her place at home as if her life had been interrupted by a week-end instead of by a marriage and a divorce. She thought of Earl Fredericks, sometimes, and, after a few months, her thoughts became less bitter. She no longer loved him, of course. She didn't even like him, really. But she remembered him best as she had known him before their marriage, in the pleasant homes of their friends, where Earl, blond, smiling or unaccountably sullen, effeminate, posing, had fascinated her as no one else had ever done.

As every one does, Helen forgot the unpleasant things. Life in Earl's apartment and on the road became something that could be almost omitted in her thoughts, a vague blackness. She was well rid of Earl, of course. They were unsuited. He would never amount to anything. Perhaps, even his talent wasn't real. There he was, with a cheap road show. He'd probably go from one road show to another. She was different. She was a Fracier. She was still young—had all of life ahead of her. She would do something worth while. She had tried art—but there were other professions. Marriage had offered no solution, but she was free from that now, free to do anything.

The rest of the winter passed pleasantly. Helen was grateful for every day of it. She took long walks again and found new books in the library. She met Horace Bellington at a tea and asked him to call. She told him that she had been married but was free again now. He was practicing law but not making much of a go at it. He was still unattached and was glad to see Helen. He called rather frequently after that and they had long talks and went to the quaint, formal receptions of the "old families."

But this was not life, freedom! This was not doing the things that Helen felt must lay just a step ahead. She planned a dozen things, inconsequential, unnecessary. She even talked them over with her parents.

Mr. and Mrs. Fracier listened rather more closely to Helen's plans than had been their wont, in earlier days. Although the Fraciers knew, beyond the least possible doubt, that they represented family, breeding, human perfection in a way that these things were represented by few other, they could not, seemingly, convince the world of it. Phillip Fracier's standing in the law had never been notable. The least important of a group of lawyers, he had been put to work, on a small monthly allowance, on unimportant cases. Now, through a dearth of these as well as those which could occupy the more talented members of the firm, Mr. Fracier found his drawing account reduced, just when the rise in prices made the reduction seem almost tricky. Then, too, one of the studios became, even with repairs, unfit for even the habitation of an artist who cared more for picturesqueness than sanitation. It proved unsuitable for a garage or a storehouse and now stood empty, though the taxes on the lot continued. Being a good business man, according to his lights, Phillip Fracier had already mortgaged all of his property that had not descended to him in that condition. So money was needed. Of course, Helen was a Fracier and there were things she couldn't do and retain her position, though the Fraciers would have become confused—and indignant—if you had asked them to define just what Helen's position really was. But, surely, there was something ladylike, dignified that she could do—and with profit.

The next winter, Helen found a solution to her problem. Rather, her throat

did. It had been aching since the winter before. She consulted the family doctor who said her tonsils must come out and that it would be best to have the operation in the hospital. Helen had never been in a hospital except to bring gifts of home-made jelly or small rose-buds, appropriate sick-room flowers, to ailing friends. She actually looked forward to the operation.

Bridge drove her to the hospital and she was taken to a private room, where she was to spend two or three days. The halls smelled of disinfectant, pleasantly clean. Helen liked seeing the internes in crisp white, the clean, business-like, smoothly coiffured nurses.

Helen took an anæsthetic, her tonsils were removed and she was back in the high, narrow hospital cot, slightly sick, with a pain in her throat and an ice bag pressed against it. It hurt when she swallowed and she lived on soups and liquids.

Lying there, with nothing to do, Helen watched the nurse who came in to take her temperature. Helen felt, suddenly, that being a nurse was the nicest thing that could happen to her. That would be doing something real —and helping other people, too. How pleasant, to be dressed in crisp linen, to soothe the sick, to be praised for attentions and remembered gratefully! She had been married, of course, but even that didn't put an end to romance. After all, if a man, rich and handsome, young and kind, should fall in love with her, clad in blue and white, when she laid a gentle hand on his forehead— in a lot of books she had read, patients married their nurses. The pleasant life, too! The nurses seemed to belong to a little sorority. The patients were all outsiders, but the nurses chatted to each other in pleasant soft undertones and smiled and had little jokes together.

Helen questioned the day nurse and the night nurse about nursing. They told her, indefinitely, that it was hard work. She felt that, if she hadn't been a patient, they would have told her more about it.

When she was well, she consulted the family doctor. He agreed it was a good profession for women. Graduates got twenty-five dollars and more, right along. And, while you were learning, three years, you lived in the hospital and got your expenses paid. Why of course you did a lot of good. It was hard work, now—

Helen assured him she didn't mind work. And she believed it. She felt that it was work she needed, invigorating work, real work, something to make her feel alive. A hospital full of pleasant smells, mysterious duties, the nursing of handsome men and dear little children. At last a career had come to her!

Helen went to three hospitals and put in applications, giving references and answering questions about age, education and health. She was rather old to begin, they told her—they preferred girls of twenty-one or two, and country girls were best, stronger. Still, if she really wanted to try. . . .

A pleasant month of anticipation in which Helen dreamed of gliding softly between hospital beds of a big ward— she had visited the wards on the day she left the hospital. Already, she was adjusting pillows, receiving little nods of thanks and appreciation.

One rainy Wednesday, when she least expected it, the summons came, typewritten, the envelope looking as unromantic as a grocer's bill. Helen prepared the necessary articles, packed her old suitcase, still retaining one forlorn hotel tag reminder of her trip to Europe, kissed her parents good-bye—she had been told she could visit them every evening if she wanted to—and went to the hospital on the appointed day.

It was an old hospital but a good one. Her room was a tiny cubby hole of a place, a private room before the new wing had been added. She met the girl she was to share it with, a Canadian, strong, young, capable, with smooth blonde hair, red cheeks and a determined disposition. She had been raised on a farm as had a Canadian girl in a room just across the hall, and, although the two had never met before

coming to the hospital, they had a great deal in common and Helen felt left out of things immediately. They were strong, almost masculine, she felt. Their laughter was low and deep. Helen thought that they disregarded a number of the niceties of life.

Everything felt strange at the hospital, as if she were in prison. She felt, always, as if she were doing the wrong thing. One of the nurses showed her her seat in the dining room and that night she ate with a group of chattering, interested nurses and felt out of place, very much alone. They all seemed rough, too energetic, almost coarse. They spoke of death, off hand, as if it were a most commonplace happening. They talked of operations in detail in the midst of eating. Helen shuddered. She could be a nurse—and still have—delicacies, she felt.

XI

THE next day her work started. For a week, she was not to go on duty. She put on one of her clean probationer's uniforms of blue and the cap that went with it and felt that it would seem only a few days before she had finished the three months of probation and be accepted as a real nurse and wear the regulation uniform of blue and white. How neat they looked, those uniforms.

Helen learned there was no scrubbing to do. That pleased her. She had been a little frightened, for someone had told her that nurses must do scrubbing and things like that. She found she must take care of her own room, and, on ward duty, must dust, but there were no floors nor windows to wash. She felt it would be quite easy.

The first week there was only class room work. Helen liked the lectures. Sitting in the lecture room, note book in hand, listening to the grave doctor, she felt at home. She looked around at the other nurses. Some of them were puckering their foreheads in an earnest effort to comprehend everything. Sometimes, some of them looked rather stupid after a simple remark. Helen felt superior. Why, she understood the doctor perfectly. She had attended so many lectures on so many different subjects. She took careful notes in her little note book.

With the other work, she was not clever. Her hands had had no training except at art school. Chemistry puzzled her from the first. Although she was supposed to have had the equivalent of a high school education, there were many things, in a private school for girls, that can be glossed over with a word or two. There had been a little history and Latin, but English and French had been the subjects dwelled upon. In the hospital, there was class room work in dietetics and Helen's knowledge of the kitchen was lamentably small. Anatomy, although she tried to be broad, Helen felt to be rather indelicate. She'd try to overcome that, of course.

There was bed-making, too. Helen tried, for the first time in her life, really to make a bed. The nurse who explained the mystery of the folded corners did not know that Helen did not know how to make, properly, any kind of a bed, and wondered at her stupidity and the way the sheet crushed and pulled and puckered under her hands.

Surgical dressings were interesting, just wrapping and folding material as you are told, though Helen didn't comprehend in the least what the dressings were for nor how they were to be used. After the first few days, instead of learning things clearly, the whole work became a sort of a fog which she didn't quite see through. Of course it would probably all clear up and seem simple, after a while. If these other girls could understand this—simple girls, from small towns, of no particular family, why she could, of course. How tired she was at night!

Her hours were from seven in the morning until seven at night, with two hours off during the day. Helen slept those two hours and in the evening she was too tired to take more than a short walk. The hospital was uptown, which

meant a long ride and she had to be back at ten, so Helen didn't go home to visit.

The second week, Helen was put on ward duty, an hour at a time at first, and then longer periods. She made beds, took temperatures, arranged patients for the night. From the beginning, this was distasteful to her. The class room work, with a smiling healthy nurse to bandage, or in bed when the bedding was to be changed, was rather interesting, though tiresome. Now, with peevish, suffering patients, charity patients, instead, it was very different. They growled when she touched them and she felt guilty and timid. She didn't do anything quite right. In the men's ward she felt out of place, as if she were doing a wrong thing, to be there. It seemed quite awful to her—to come into such close contact with people, when she had never come into contact with people at all. If she hadn't been married before, which she thought gave her a worldly attitude, she felt she couldn't have stood it at all.

The ward duty grew harder. There were patients to wash now, and bandages and packs to arrange. Every minute of it was torture. The constant sight of sick people, of pain, made her nervous.

One day, passing through a corridor, an interne stopped her. He seemed almost apologetic for he saw she was new.

"I don't seem to see an orderly or a maid," he said, "and the nurses are busy. Here, please, a man on his way from the operating room."

Helen followed, down a narrow passage. She saw two nurses wheeling a man into a private room, then lift him onto the bed. The interne pointed—the patient had been nauseated, had soiled the floor. They wanted her—to clean it up!

Helen got a rag and a bucket, and, with averted face, knelt down and started the task. It was tremendously unpleasant. She felt herself getting dizzy. She hadn't guessed there would be things like that. Why, she had never even seen a sick person before entering the hospital, unless the patient was lying neatly tucked into a white bed, hands resting on the cover. This!

She finished, finally. Almost blindly she walked up the corridor, emptied the pail, went to her room. She was just able to throw herself on the bed when she was overcome by dizziness and loathing. She lay there the rest of the afternoon.

The Canadian girl found her.

"What's the matter?" she asked.

Helen told her as best she could.

The girl laughed.

"I don't know as I ever took it that hard," she said, "but I'll admit there are some things about nursing that aren't the same as your afternoon teas. You'll get used to it or—"

"Or what?" asked Helen.

"Or you won't," said the girl, and laughed, disagreeably, Helen thought. She'd prove to that girl, that, even though she were a gentlewoman, she was as capable of accomplishing things as—as other people were.

She kept on, bravely enough. There were several more days of ward duty, of endless walking, peevish patients, annoyances, doing the wrong things. She was so tired at night she could hardly sleep. It was all so tiresomely unpleasant.

Then a man died in the ward and Helen was called as an assistant to help lay him out. She had seen corpses before, four of them, Aunt Helen, her grandfather, a distant cousin, George. All of them had been carefully arranged in their coffins, their hands folded, a look of impersonal calm on their faces. Here, in the bare room where they had moved the corpse, it was different. Helen tried to assist in the washing and plugging, felt the cold touch of the body, closed her eyes, shuddered. Still, it had to be done.

The nurse left the room for more cotton. Helen was alone with the corpse. He had been a fat man of fifty, perhaps. His skin seemed in thick layers on his body. He was lying almost

on one side, where the nurse had turned him. Suddenly, he gave a groan and turned over!

The next thing Helen knew, a doctor was bending over her; another nurse had appeared. She was lying on a table—and opposite her, covered, was what she knew as the fat corpse that was not a corpse at all.

"He's alive, he came to," moaned Helen.

"That's all right," smiled the doctor, "he's dead. He'll never get any deader. They do that, sometimes. You'll get used to it."

That night, Helen dreamed of the corpse who groaned.

The next day a boy was injured in a street accident and brought to the hospital. Probationers were not supposed to be in the accident ward nor to attend accident cases, but Helen was passing and one of the older physicians, only noticing that she wore a uniform, called her. The boy was bleeding at the nose and one leg hung limp. Helen had been kept so far away from things that the sight of blood still made her faint. She tried, inadequately, to remove the trousers, the shirt. The boy was unconscious, but groaning, and, tugging at the trousers, Helen felt that perhaps a leg would come off in her hand. Finally, she had to admit she couldn't do it.

She went into the hall and summoned a nurse. One of the Canadian girls came, with just time for a look of scorn before she went on with the work Helen couldn't do.

Helen stumbled back to her room. This, then, was a failure, too. She couldn't go through these things again. She remembered a man she had washed the day before. Her feet were still sore and tired from endless standing and walking. Her head buzzed. Her eyes ached. The Canadian girls, the other girls, oh, they were different, harder, maybe. Anyhow, she couldn't! Nothing but suffering and smells and blood! She put on her street clothes, adjusted her small hat, packed her suitcase and found the superintendent.

"I'm going home. I'm—I'm sorry. I—I can't stand it," she said.

The superintendent was not as astonished as Helen had feared she might be.

"Very well," she nodded and even smiled. "It is good you found it out so early. I was afraid you were too frail. Some frail looking people are very strong and have wonderful nerves and I had thought perhaps you would have. I am sorry."

She reached out her hand in friendly dismissal. Helen said good-bye. That was over!

XII

THE house in Twelfth Street, again. The old routine of breakfast, lunch, tea and dinner, with Bridge serving and only three at the big table.

The same guests called, a few less, perhaps. Occasionally Aunt Grace took her for a drive or had her to dinner—on an "off" night.

She had failed again. She couldn't keep on failing. There must be something she could do. She did so want to do something big and wonderful. If she could write . . . surely, she could write!

At the secretary in the library, before which had sat so many Fraciers in other days, on a tablet of paper with faint blue lines, which she found in the secretary drawer, Helen tried writing. It might turn out that she would be a real writer—maybe a great writer—one to make the name of Fracier live as it ought to live!

She tried a little poem, first, marking the accents with little dots and dashes, as she had been taught to do at school. It didn't sound just right. She couldn't think of anything to write a poem about, anyhow. There was nothing she reallly wanted to say. Maybe, though—fiction.

Helen scribbled through several pages. She couldn't think of a plot and she knew plots were the first thing. She started several stories, hoping that the plot would come later. In one, she described a mountain scene and let the

heroine appear on the side of the mountain. She didn't know what to write after that.

She put the writing away, for a few days, and went out in search of material, as she had heard writers always did. She couldn't find any. Things looked just about the same, Washington Square, dusty, familiar, friendly; Fifth Avenue, with its old homes lifting their skirts away from encroaching wholesale houses; the side streets, smug, inhospitable; Sixth Avenue, full of color, noisy, cheap—surely there was no story in this.

Finally, she did write a few things working many hours over them, scribbling, biting the end of her pen, frowning, crossing out, erasing. One was a romantic love story with a plot concerning loss of memory and mistaken identity; the other, a story for children, about a poor little boy being adopted by rich people. In places, they sounded a little peculiar to Helen, as she read them over, but she hoped they were good. She copied them, on large-sized paper, purchased for the purpose, with a new, stiff pen, in her neat slanting hand. She sent them to two of her favorite publications, and waited. When they came back, with curt, printed refusals, she sent them out again. She knew she had read poorer things in print. She read the love story to Horace Bellington when he called and he told her he thought it was good and agreed that it wasn't merit, but pull, that really accomplished things, these days. If either one of them only knew someone who could help them—

Helen still liked Horace. She felt that, when he succeeded, she might, even, perhaps, marry him. They were both well-born, and if he had money they could take their right place in the world. Even now he was having his opportunity.

Horace's firm had given him a chance to show what he was worth. He told Helen with great pride. A case, oh, quite an important one, had been assigned to him. Even now, he was working on it. It would come up in a week or two in the Court of Special Sessions. They were both quite excited. It might be the beginning of almost anything!

He told Helen about it, bringing her home from a tea, and she persuaded him to stay to dinner. She told her parents, and, with small glasses of cooking sherry—the "wine cellar" was nearly empty—they drank to the big case and to the coming lawyer of prominence. Horace told them he didn't know whether he wanted to be a criminal or a corporation lawyer, but thought being a criminal lawyer, getting into the heart of things, big fights, would be a lot more exciting than civil cases, anyhow.

Horace's case came up. He telephoned Helen the result. It seemed something had gone wrong with some investigations he had made or something like that. Anyhow, the other side had a lot of material he had never heard of—almost laughed at him, it seemed, an awful error, but not really his fault. He could not explain to Helen how it happened, when he saw her, but his firm blamed him, of course, and were rather angry. Later, he brought her a clipping from one of the newspapers, the only one that had mentioned the case. It contained only three lines, so there may have been some mistake as to the importance of the case. Horace's name was not mentioned.

After that, Helen gradually lost interest in Horace. His tales from the office were not inspiring. The firm sent him out on a lot of routine investigations and he spent most of his time looking up and recording cases and locating precedents. Helen knew now, as surely as she knew anything, that Horace would go on this way, always doing stupid, tiresome things in a slow, gentlemanly, painstaking way, without a flare, without inspiration. She was done with him.

But she? She wouldn't go on like that, doing nothing. Life still stretched ahead, alluring, baffling, beckoning. She must do something. She was only

thirty. That wasn't old. She remembered how she had felt when she was a little girl and had stood at the family vault and had made up her mind to be free. The chains were still there. They had never been away for a minute. They had seemed to slacken, to let her do unpleasant things. What could she do, besides routine things, reading, walking, calling? Something lovely, wonderful, would happen soon, of course.

XIII

THEN Helen met Rhoda Summers. At an art exhibition, free, on the third floor of a big silver shop, Helen, pretending a connoisseur's knowledge of the paintings, talked to Rhoda. Helen thought Rhoda looked like a successful woman, a feminist who believed in new things. Rhoda had short black hair, very straight, and heavy black eyebrows. She was perhaps thirty or thirty-five and wore a long grey coat, open at the throat, showing a stiff collar and wide black tie. She wore a hat of soft grey felt with a black quill in it.

Helen found that Rhoda had been selling things in an exclusive little shop on Fifth Avenue. There had been a quarrel. Rhoda had been in the right, of course, so, "because I'm a lady and won't argue with anyone," Rhoda had left. Helen did not quite understand the type who proclaims herself "a lady," but she did understand about the quarrel. She hated quarreling, herself. Now, Rhoda was looking for something to do.

"If I had the capital," she said, "I'd start a shop, myself, down in Greenwich Village. That's where the money is. Everyone goes there, the Villagers themselves, and all the tourists, from as far away as Texas or the Bronx. There are going to be several fortunes made there in the next few years and I'd like to have my finger in the pie of making one of them."

Helen liked the idea. She told Rhoda she lived in the Village, really, and knew all about it. Rhoda walked home with her. Helen saw Rhoda every day, after that. They talked schemes and Helen loved it. She felt that at last she was on the right path.

Even Mrs. Fracier was impressed with Rhoda's breeziness, her self-confidence. A few years before, she would have been indignant at the idea of Helen going into trade, even in this artistic manner. But Fracier money continued to ebb, slowly. These were no days to let family interfere with fortune.

Just at this time, Mr. Fracier found someone to buy the country house. It was badly in need of repairs and could not have been occupied again, anyhow. The new owners were going to put a fine summer home on the property. Mr. Fracier gave Helen two hundred and fifty dollars toward her venture. Rhoda had no money, of course, but she found a friend who loaned her fifty dollars. With three hundred dollars, Helen felt like a capitalist. The two girls decided immediately on the shop, the details of it, everything.

They rented, paying one month's rental in advance and taking a year's lease, the first floor of an old house in Sheridan Square. It had already been used as a shop by an earlier searcher for Village fortune. The rent was forty dollars a month, and this included a room in the rear that Rhoda could occupy. They decided against counters—it would be something different, intimate. Looking at the other shops in the neighborhood, they knew that theirs would outdistance all of them in beauty and originality. Already, Helen dreamed of herself as hostess at informal gatherings of famous people, writers, artists, the center of a life of gayety, of moment. After the shop had succeeded, they could add afternoon tea—every woman has a secret longing to run a tea shop—and serve tea in fragile cups (she'd bring some of the best Fracier porcelain) and tiny sandwiches. Maybe, even, Bridge would consent to serve. The shop would be a salon, a road to real Freedom.

They decided on "The Candlestick" as an appropriate name. No one seemed to be using it just then. Helen thought it quite nice. They paid an artist acquaintance of Rhoda's, just then unemployed, ten dollars to paint a purple candlestick with orange letters. He usually charged great prices for pictures, he explained, but he wasn't so awfully busy, just then, and Rhoda was an old friend . . .

They bought hour-glass and Windsor chairs and gate leg tables, those three sure indications of budding artisticality. Rhoda, from her previous experience, knew how to obtain credit, and, by giving references, they were able to get a small stock of goods, which Rhoda selected. She was a determined young woman, and Helen, admitting her inferiority in experience and judgment, just gasped and made ineffectual remarks. The stock consisted of quantities of candlesticks, mahogany, brass, lacquer, silver plate; pincushions too hard to admit pins easily; bags of various sizes, all in weird "modern" colorings; hangers, cheaply made toilet things—a miscellany of articles that can best be characterized as "suitable for gifts."

At one wholesale house, Helen saw some painted boxes and dinner cards that appealed to her as especially desirable. She nudged Rhoda, and, when they were on the street, confided, quite excitedly, that she knew she could paint things like that—they could be made up cheaply and sold at a big profit. So Helen purchased some paints and a few dozen tin boxes and some plain dinner cards. From then until the opening of the shop, Helen spent every spare moment painting. She didn't understand painting on tin very well, and in spite of the advice of the man from whom she purchased the paints, the boxes did not look very well, even to her.

"We can put them around, though," she told Rhoda. "It will make it seem as if we had a lot of things."

The cards were better. Helen toiled for many hours over them, drawing butterflies and women's heads and landscapes. She could almost taste the dinners they were to accompany.

The girls used nearly all of their cash and all of their credit, but, finally the shop was in shape. Evelyn had scrubbed it. A man from a neighboring paint shop had painted it, Rhoda's selection, rather a brilliant yellow. They hung cretonne curtains at the two windows and the door. The shop was ready!

Rhoda had spoken frequently about the advantage of sending out cards before the opening. When the time came, it developed she really had no one to send cards to. She told Helen she preferred having her many personal friends find out about the shop from others. Mrs. Fracier, who had taken a placid interest in the shop, even coming down one afternoon and walking gingerly about, put her foot down on Helen's sending out announcements. For a Fracier to take an interest in a little shop, as a fad, might be permitted, smiled on. To use social acquaintances as a furtherance in a mere business venture was unheard of.

The girls opened the shop on Monday, as that day seemed the best for openings. It was in November—just in time to catch the Christmas trade—Rhoda explained. Helen wore one of the dresses Aunt Grace had given her, in the days when Aunt Grace was being "kind," carefully made over into a semblance of this year's fashion. Her clothes were reaching the shabby stage that she had known as a child. Rhoda wore a smock of dark red and put a band of purple around her forehead. Everything was ready for the first customer.

The first customer did not come.

Rhoda went to lunch. When she returned, Helen went, hurrying back, so as not to miss anyone. They rearranged, for the dozenth time, pairs of candlesticks containing bright-colored candles. They pushed a Windsor chair a little more attractively near a gate-leg table. On the chair was a round boudoir pillow, priced at six dollars.

On the table were chintz-covered book-ends, a pincushion, candlesticks, a powder box.

No one came into the shop all day.

The next day Helen brought some lunch and the two girls did not go out at all. Helen read, but Rhoda did not care for reading. The next day was another day of waiting. Rhoda left about three, to take a walk and did not come back during the afternoon. The next morning some neighborhood children came in, looked around, touched things with grimy hands. Helen did not know what to do. Rhoda ordered them out. Later in the day one of them threw a stone through a window. It cost seven dollars and thirty-five cents to have it replaced and nearly all of their money was gone.

The next afternoon two women came in. They inspected things, asked questions, admired—and departed. For two more days no one entered the shop at all.

A boy opened the door the next afternoon, at three, and threw in an advertisement about a new Village restaurant. The next afternoon, two acquaintances of Rhoda, a tall, white boy, smoking a briar pipe, and a giggly blonde girl, in a smock and sweater, who held the boy's arm all during the call, came in. They looked around and predicted that "things ought to go all right, though you ought to have got Zeller to do your decorations. He did the new Lizard Tea Room and it's a b'ar."

Another day and no customers.

Helen moved everything in the shop again. She placed candlesticks in the windows and lit four of the precious orange ones, to make the shop look "cozy." No customers.

At the end of three weeks bills started to arrive. There was no money for them nor for the second month's rent, which was due in advance, for the rent had started almost a week before the shop actually opened. Rhoda laughed unpleasantly and said it looked as if it were all off with them. She suggested filing a petition in bankruptcy and having it all over with. Helen didn't know much about it, but she said she would ask her father.

The next day, when she went to the shop, she noticed the stock looked peculiar, different. On the first gate-leg table was a note from Rhoda. She had written:

I've taken a few things. They do not pay me for my time nor money, but I guess I'll have to be satisfied. You didn't know anything about running a shop and shouldn't have tried. I thought you had a lot of friends to help you out or I wouldn't have gone in with you. I'm leaving, for I don't want to stay and quarrel with you about it as I try to remember I am a lady.

Yours truly,
Rhoda F. Summers.

There was no address and Helen found that Rhoda had taken her things from the back room. Rhoda had also taken some of the nicest pieces, the biggest boudoir pillow, the best brass candlesticks, the cutest powder boxes. Oh, well, if that seemed to Rhoda the thing to do! There wasn't anaything to do about it. The shop was a failure anyhow.

XIV

MR. FRACIER took charge. Helen never knew exactly what he did; she didn't understand business very well. A few days later there was a sign on the door, which was bolted.

The bolted door seemed a cruel thing. The shop had seemed so personal, so dear, to Helen. She had worked hard over the boxes and the dinner cards and arranging things. She had thought so hopefully about the customers who didn't come. She had so visualized the things the shop would mean. Well, it was over. She walked slowly home, thinking of the bolted door. Wasn't there anything she could do?

She found herself staring at a poster on a billboard. Almost unconsciously,

she was repeating over and over to herself, "Earl Fredericks, Earl Fredericks." She seemed to be reading it. She threw off the thoughts of the shop and looked intently at the billboard. Had she seen rightly? Yes, there it was, in big black letters—"The Fifth Avenue Frolic—Atop the Bilton Roof—Book by A. Harmon Apton—Lyrics by Earl Fredericks."

Was it the Earl Fredericks she had—known? She hadn't heard. But then, she never saw anyone. She stopped at a newsstand on Sixth Avenue and bought copies of the *Billboard*. On the road, members of the company always bought it when they wanted theatrical information. Even the fact that it was published in Cincinnati and on Thursdays had stuck in her memory.

In her room that evening she found what she was looking for:

NEW MUSICAL GENIUS ON BROADWAY

Earl Fredericks, who wrote the music for "The Fifth Avenue Frolic," is the newest of Broadway's musical finds. Only three years out of the West, Fredericks is already doing big things. His music is a decided success and he is under contract to write the score for "Friend Wife," which Ernie Hammer will put on in December. Fredericks is still in his twenties. He was formerly a director of musical comedies and has been with the Metropolitan Orchestra. He is learning early how to get fame and money.

So—Earl was succeeding! Helen had thought of him as a failure, living a mean life on the road. And he was getting fame and money and friends—she could see his blond hair, his rather effeminate features, the affectations that women liked. He was a success and here she was . . .

And suddenly, as she sat there in the little, cherry-furnished room, it came to Helen that, no matter what she tried to do, she always would be a failure. There was nothing she could do that would be worth while. The indefiniteness of herself came to her. She had no strength nor power nor ability to do things. There was no use fighting. You can't fight against being the last Fracier. You can't fight against generations of uselessness when the generations have gone. All of her attempts at Freedom came back to her. She saw what a futile struggle each of them had been. Oh, well, there was nothing to do about it.

It was awfully noisy in the little back room. She rose and put down the window and looked out. The old houses in Eleventh Street had been remodeled. They stood now, red fronted, white doored, pert, modern, impudent. Into one of them had moved a famous dancer who had the faculty of being able to get on the front page of any newspaper. Her parties lasted until morning. In another was a family of young children, lusty, newly rich Americans. They took turns in driving a car and seemed always taking it out or bringing it home. They used a back room, almost across from Helen's windows, as a gymnasium and were always shouting and screaming. The other houses seemed just as noisy, new people with no breeding.

It occurred to Helen, then, that the room which had once been Aunt Helen's might be better for her. There was no reason why she shouldn't occupy it—it was so much lighter and quieter. She went up to see it.

It would do nicely. The big mahogany dresser, the comfortable low chair—why hadn't she thought of it before? She looked out of the window on Twelfth Street. Twelfth Street, fortunately, still had some of its old dignity. It had been "discovered," of course, but old houses, even when made over into studios, kept some of their old time gentility. It was quiet, and that, after all, was a big thing. She'd tell her mother about it right away, so Bridge could move her things. How good it was, having Bridge there always.

That night Philip Fracier spoke regretfully about the closing of the shop. It hurt Helen to see that he had been rather banking on it, though he had never said much. When he had sold the country house, he had invested in some stocks, at the instigation of a

friend. Already, he found the stocks were of little value. He should have kept away from them. He knew that now. He never would quite understand things like that. He had hinted to the firm that he needed more money—for living expenses—and the senior partner had almost laughed at him. And remembering how little he really accomplished at the office, he had refrained from saying anything more. He hoped that didn't get them started to thinking about how little he really did do.

Two weeks later, Bridge died. It was a great shock to all of them. They had realized that Bridge and Evelyn were no longer young but it had never occurred to them that they could die, any more than that a chair could die. Helen had never felt the affection for Bridge that Southern children feel toward their mammy or colored uncle. He had been more distant, less of a real person. But, always, she had known him and liked him a great deal. She remembered the countless, kind little things he had always done for her. He had kept his place, Bridge had, as much as he could. He was always silent, gentle, dignified. Although compelled to do things no butler is supposed even to know about Bridge had done them well and decently. He had managed to preserve an attitude of perfect calm and an English accent. And now, Helen realized that Bridge and his attitude toward the world and toward the Fraciers had been the one thing that kept them in their position, a sort of prop that held them upright. A butler, a correct, English family butler had meant a background—had meant so many things. Now Bridge was dead and Evelyn was old. A new slatternly, poorly-paid cook had long since replaced Mrs. Clinton. They couldn't afford a man at all now. In fact, there wasn't any money.

There they were—Helen and her mother and father—in the Twelfth Street house—with nothing. There had to be money enough to live on. There wasn't even that, now. They didn't need much—surely, some way—

XV

It occurred to Helen, then, how many empty rooms there were—her old room, George's old room, the empty guest rooms. Twelfth Street was being considered highly desirable by the artists and writers and fakers that cluttered around New York's honey-pot Bohemia. They might be able to rent out a few of those empty rooms and get enough money to live on! Helen knew well enough that renting rooms was the last resort of a gentlewoman, the last clutch at decency. Society, position, money, even family, had dwindled into nothingness. The wanting to be free, feel, do something, had been crushed out by the knowledge of how inadequate she was to attain anything

Helen knew what her mother would say about renting rooms, how horrified she would be at the idea of Fraciers doing that—because her friends might know—the necessity of subterfuge, denying, pretending. Yet, Helen knew that her mother would yield because she always yielded, because she must yield, that she finally would say something quite vague about it being all right, that, after all, they were Fraciers and the position the Fraciers occupied could not be lowered by a trifling thing like this that they might do. And Helen knew that her mother would believe the things she said.

Evelyn knocked at the door. Her eyes were red but she wore her neat cap and apron.

"The Misses Gilderman are calling, Miss Helen," she said.

"I'll be down at once. I'll pour the tea. Tell mother," Helen answered.

She looked out of the window, she saw Twelfth Street, coldly aloof, the nearly-worn-out carriage of the Misses Gilderman, the dignified old man on the box. She knew she would go down and talk to them about society, the dreadful actions of the climbers, the opera, which none of them could afford to attend.

She went to the dresser, as, on

similar occasions, Aunt Helen had so often done, as Great-Aunt Margaret had done in this very room, arranged her hair and her collar more neatly, and, closing the door softly after her, went down the stairs. One must serve tea at five, to callers, no matter what happened. Helen felt that she must not forget that she was, after all, a Fracier.

THE END

THE PROGRESS OF A KISS

By John Venable

I

HE kissed the pretty girl.

II

He kissed the pretty girl's mother.

III

He kissed the Baptist minister.

IV

He kissed eight sticky children who resembled him.

WOMEN may squabble over a given man, but in the general offensive against men in the mass the whole sex constitutes an allied war council.

NO woman ever actually turns away an eligible man; the most she ever does is to lay him on the table.

THE man who doesn't tire of love never was in love.

I MUST HAVE BEEN A LITTLE TOO ROUGH

By George B. Jenkins, Jr.

I MUST have been a little too rough.

"Women," her father had told me, "are tired of the courteous treatment of the average man. They are bored by the vapid compliments, the silly lies, the stupid chatter of pale youths with gardenias in their lapels. If you want to be a success with women, be rude! Be violent! Overpower them, assert your physical superiority! If necessary, beat them!!" He became quite excited. "Pound them! Assault them! Half-murder them!!"

I listened to him respectfully, though I do not care for him at all. Yet I believed him, for he is notoriously successful in his *affaires*.

I decided to test his theories. Striding into the next room, I grasped his daughter about the waist.

"I love you!" I roared, squeezing her until her face was purple.

"You belong to me!" I shouted, dragging her around the room by her hair, and overturning several chairs in our progress.

"Damn you!" I shrieked, striking her on the shoulder, where the blow left a blue welt, "I will fight the world for you."

She began to whimper.

"Shut up!" I ordered, in my rudest manner, and slung her across the room.

But I must have been a little too rough, for she fell out of the window.

A WOMAN never knows whether she should encourage a man or not. If she does, he will usually become frightened, and cease his attentions. If she does not, he will become bored, and cease his attentions.

THE most annoying thing in life is to hear the woman you thought was unhappily married cry because her husband is so good to her.

THE LOST WOMAN

By Newton A. Fuessle

HUDSON'S sentimental wings were never severely singed until he was well into his twenty-fifth year. His mother worried and wondered what ailed him.

At college he had directed tender, but merely tentative, thoughts into perilous directions. Once a pensive brunette with Mocha hair and Java eyes filled him with a wistful, tristful feeling. But the flurry subsided before anything happened.

Once again at the time of the Junior Prom. a sparkling creature snagged him for a fortnight and kept his thoughts revolving uneasily about her Orange Pekoe hair and Ceylon eyes. But again he escaped. His time had not yet come.

Then he met Imogene Herrick. And all so-called bets were off. She was one of those triumphant creatures, who bloom and beckon like hot-house flowers ready to be picked. Imogene liked his style, eyes, Alma Mater, family, the way he held his cigar, and everything she regarded as essential in a suitor. She let him call her Imogene and presently kiss her. Daily, he scanned those pages of newspapers where landlords describe the glories of vacant abodes.

His sentimental journey having passed the tender shoals of caresses and kisses, he pulled himself together one evening, while seated on an ottoman at his lady's feet, and said:

"I worship you, Imogene, and want you to marry me."

She beamed receptively.

"But—" he continued hesitantly.

She raised her eyebrows with the superiority of one of our few remaining queens.

"I'm afraid I'm too poor to keep you in the way you ought to be kept. You know I'm supporting my mother and sister. One of these days, of course, I'll be advanced by my company. But when, is uncertain, and I'm afraid it would be a crime to ask you to wait," he explained in the tone of a gun-man pleading guilty to murder in the first degree.

"Your first duty is toward your own people," she answered. "I couldn't think of usurping their place—even if you insisted. Let's wait."

For the rest of the evening there were tears of chagrin in Imogene's yes, protestations of undying love upon her lips, and blurred images of other suitors hovering vaguely in her mind. A fortnight later she sailed with her mother, an eminently practical woman, for a winter at Palm Beach; and soon after their return in the spring, Imogene married a promising young lawyer by the name of Berkeley.

Five years spun past, weaving their changes. Hudson's mother had died, his sister had married, and his income had trebled. He had joined the University Club, and there he dwelt in a suite of cozy rooms with those erudite bachelors and widowers who had won their lettered spurs, and look down upon those who know not track records and Terrence, football scores and Flaubert, highballs and Horatio.

Having collided with the rocks, romantically speaking, Hudson had, however, remained approximately true to Imogene. Her picture beamed upon him from between the panels of his room. So faithful did he remain to the lost Imogene that he was abandoned as

hopeless by match-making matrons, and as queer and incomprehensible by the bachelors, both of arts and of artful intrigue, who lived at the club.

Hudson settled back into a state of charming melancholy. His favorite novel became "The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard," by Anatole France, and its Russian companion-piece, "A Tiresome Story," by Anton Chekov.

Evenings, after dinner and perhaps a bit of Kelly pool, he would withdraw to the solitude of his room, and there yield to gray moods which had become habitual.

With his pipe lit, sunk in his leather chair, his glances trained mournfully upon the picture of the lost girl, a moody spirit of self-pity would take possession of him. Its delicious, narcotic, satisfying influence filled and solaced him strangely. It became his most cherished dissipation. These were hours of exquisite loneliness. All the wives, registered and unregistered, in so-called Christendom could not have afforded him more tranquil ecstacy than these evenings of brooding over his loss.

At times, a wistful mood led him into mournful efforts with his own pen. These, of course, were banal. Yet his metrical mutations were balm of Gilead to his sagging spirits. His tepid triolets, soggy sonnets, and dismal ditties, though they shamed him in the light of day, offered respite and nepenthe under the light of his evening lamp.

In five years his loss had re-keyed his life, rendering drab and gray his whole world. An undercurrent of contented sadness gave tone and background to his personality, imparted a certain charm which, if skillfully painted, might have resembled a November twilight.

Men make many kinds of fools of themselves over women won and lasses lost. Some take to drink, exile, drugs, or the stage-door. Hudson sought solace in less dissipated, roving, pharmaceutical, or theatrical a manner. His loss brought only those evening moods which left him with no wine-bibber's dullness of brain on the morning after, nor yet with the reckless spender's decimated purse. Instead, they encouraged thrift and regularity of hours and habits, so that in time he was elected vice-president of his company.

Hudson had not seen Mrs. Berkeley since her marriage. One April day there was a small square envelope in his morning mail, marked, of course, "Personal." For five years he had clung to the hope of some day hearing from Imogene; and now, as the once familiar handwriting fell under his gaze, his blood quickened. The letter, posted in the city, was signed "Imogene." She would be in the Queen Anne room of the Hotel Regent on the following afternoon at three. Could he find time and inclination to come?

Through the remainder of that day, Hudson walked like one in a blinding bewildering dream, clothed in a glad unrest. The tumult of his emotions led him that evening to a Wagnerian opera. Its brilliant, sounding score lent wild wings to his feelings, bearing him dizzily aloft, high above the drab valleys where he had been dwelling.

At three the next day, groomed to the minute, he strode into the Regent and sought the spot appointed. His hands closed over Imogene's, and their eyes took each other's measure.

"How good it is to see you again!" he exclaimed.

"It has been a long time," she answered, with a tone that informed him that the elapsed years had kept him vividly in her mind.

"And how is Berkeley?" he asked at length.

"Why, haven't you heard? Mr. Berkeley's been dead for nearly a year and a half."

"Dead!" repeated Hudson blankly.

II

Hudson entered the room that evening like one returning home after leagues of travel. He lit his favorite pipe and blew reflective clouds of smoke. He crossed the room to Imogene's picture, and studied it long and attentively,

regarding each feature, every familiar line and curve.

"She has come back to me," he murmured. "How wonderful! How happy I am! How happy I am!" he kept repeating.

Then he realized that he was filled with uneasiness.

"What's the matter with me?" he muttered impatiently. He crossed to his mahogany wine chest, poured himself a glass of Rhine wine and drank it. He got his slippers and dressing gown out of their accustomed place and put them on. He took one of his favorite volumes off its shelf, turned to a familiar page, began to read. Twice he read a certain loved and familiar passage. It was keyed low in the gray values of a pleasant, gentle melancholy. But the usual reaction failed to take place.

He tossed half the night, unable to sleep. This was unprecedented. His thoughts wove strange arabesques of conjecture. He kept wondering about many things—just how soon the returned Imogene would probably wish to remarry, in what part of town they would live, what his sister, who had never been very keen about Imogene, would say. He reviewed the condition of his investments. Where would they go for their honeymoon? How long ought he to remain away from business?

Imogene dined with him the following evening in the Dresden room of one of the hotels. A horrible uneasiness filled Hudson. He talked trivialities. At last he pulled himself together and began to discourse volubly upon his happiness at the resumed companionship. Imogene listened with the tired satisfaction of a woman who has suffered.

"How strange you have never married," she observed, pecking at her salad.

"I made you a promise. Have you forgotten?" he answered.

"I had no idea you cared that much," she replied.

"All these years, I seem to have felt and known that some day you would come back to me, Imogene. I want you to marry me," declared Hudson with a strange, dull feeling of vague detachment.

"But I *am* married," said Imogene quickly.

"What?" said Hudson.

"I'm still the wife of the man I married. Do you think death puts an end to love?"

III

THE next evening Hudson took dinner at his club and a cue at Kelly pool. At eight-thirty he went to his room. He lit his pet pipe, sank into his favorite chair and gazed with yearning upon the picture of the woman now lost to him again.

And at once there came over him again the subtly satisfying, narcotic effect of that charming melancholy which the habit of years had rendered necessary to his happiness.

Again the interrupted wave of self-pity streamed through his soul, bringing once more that exquisite loneliness which had become as necessary as his pipe, his slippers, his dressing-gown, his dinner and his wistful, pensive volumes.

The perfect balance had been restored. Again he had his imperishable idol and perfect creature—perfect because muffled in the mists of irrevocable loss.

MEN admire a woman who resists being kissed—but they seldom come back.

LONG STORIES BRIEFLY TOLD

By Carl Glick

I

In a corner of a large department store, a poor working-girl stood sorting ribbons. There passed a millionaire who believed in reincarnation. He paused a moment and a look of recognition swept over his face.

"I knew that soul in ancient Babylon," he said. "She was a princess of the realm and I a soldier who loved in vain. Now she is paying her debt. But we shall meet again in some future time, and live a life of joy together."

Then he passed on.

The shop-girl said, "I wonder if that old jackass was trying to make a date with me?"

II

Two ragged, dusty, road-tired tramps were drinking in a cheap saloon. Outside the Salvation Army started to sing "Home, Sweet Home." One of the tramps began to cry. The other begged the bartender to give him another drink.

III

The greatest poet of his age, a world-famous dramatist, and a statesman whose politics and policies ruled a nation dined together one evening. The waiter, who knew a thing or two himself and was something of a philosopher in his spare moments, hovered near, hoping to catch some bits of wisdom, and remarks worth remembering and quoting. But the three men discussed nothing but things to eat, the price of gasoline, and women.

IV

Two men, desperately in love with the same girl, proposed marriage.

"Will you love me always?" said the girl to both of them.

"Always," replied the first man. "I will be constant ever."

"Perhaps," said the other. "You must always be as interesting as you are now."

This was the man she married.

V

A naked, sweating negro in Africa dug some diamonds from a mine.

A millionaire bought them and gave them to his mistress.

The mistress, in a sentimental moment, pawned them, and gave the money to a fund organized to buy clothing for the mine-workers in Africa.

VI

A poet turned soldier.

The crowd applauded and cheered his patriotism.

His editor asked for more poems—enough, in fact, to make a volume.

"Now is the time," he said, "for your verses to sell."

But the poet wrote back, saying, "I shall write no more poems. My present occupation gives me three meals a day, some spending money every month, shoes that are not patched, and the chance to see for myself what death brings to a soul."

VII

A woman wrote to a cynic, "Is it lack of love that makes you what you are?"

The cynic replied, "No, madame. It is having loved."

DODO'S DEAL

By Lillian Foster Barrett

RODERICK BENSON was essentially a business man. He had worked his way through college and then Harvard Law with a full sense of the success that would some day be his to compensate for the hard grind of his apprenticeship. Success had come, of course, as it comes to all who are clever enough to start out with it as a hypothesis from which to deduce the formulæ of existence. Within two years after his graduation Benson had been plunged by accident of circumstance into a spectacular lawsuit from which he emerged triumphant and trailing clouds of glory. He had been called in at the last minute to bolster up a losing suit and had won. Applause, violent applause on the part of his friends, but no surprise! For confidence begets confidence, and Benson knew his game.

Two years more of unprecedented success, and Boston appeared through the medium of his ambition a field far too restricted for operations worthy his mettle. New York beckoned.

"Why not?" he argued with himself. "Besides, there's the Stock Market. If one's to get into it, really, New York's the place."

Benson, as a boy, trafficking in pennies, had dreamed in terms of hundreds. Benson, as a successful lawyer with a comfortable income of four figures, was letting his imagination run riot in cool hundred thousands.

To want a thing and to be clever enough to get it—that compelled his admiration every time. He numbered among his friends some of the shrewdest men of the country. Some of the most unscrupulous, too, but to a true Machiavellian, what odds? He selected his men friends with an eye, and a discerning one, to their business qualities; he selected his women friends with an eye, likewise a discerning one, to their lack of anything that might indicate even remotely a business sense.

This was not a remarkable thing, for a man of Benson's type. For, after all, a woman is a recreation, or a sanctuary, if you prefer it that way, where a man can lose all sense of the grilling worry and hard bicker of the day's business. She provides a let-down of responsibility, makes no call upon the power of analysis or calculation. She should be—well, exactly what Miss Eloise Langer was.

Eloise Langer was the daughter of a Harvard professor, whose death had occurred while Benson was in college.

Eloise was slight and blonde with wonderful blue eyes. She was of a poise unusual for a girl of her age, and yet of a clinging wistfulness that made one wish to shoulder at once her responsibilities, to keep her from all contact with the pushing, shoving world. She was exactly the sort to share the life of a man like Roderick Benson. His the task to shield her delicate sensibilities from the buffets of life; hers the part to delight and soothe with quiet charm and gentleness. Benson realized all this perfectly, even in the beginning when his own bread and butter were somewhat precarious, and guarded jealously the lady from all possible claimants more fitted than he to make her a definite offer.

Eloise showed herself, as all others with whom Benson came in contact, open to his influence. In a short while

she accepted the fact that he alone had the right to call and dismissed the others gently but summarily.

The Langers' fortunes were found to be in a distinctly bad way after the death of Mr. Langer. Benson was prompt with advice in regard to investments. The advice was taken with the result of a small but sufficient income that did away with the necessity of Eloise having to put her musical knowledge to material purpose. Benson had been shocked, somehow, at the idea of the gentle Eloise giving music lessons; it didn't go at all with his conception of the woman one day to preside over the tasteful but elegant establishment that was to be his. His happy suggestion as to the investment eliminated any such necessity. The catastrophe was averted, but he felt he had had a narrow escape. So much for a youth doing night work in a hotel to enable him to procure the bare necessities of life!

With his success had come placid satisfaction in the girl of his choice. He saw more and more of Eloise, gave her presents—books, music, pictures, the sort of thing a man can give a girl he's going to marry some day. She qualified to his every demand for a wife. It is perhaps because she did so absolutely size up to his standards that he felt there was no call for precipitating matters. She was there, as she was, perfect; it remained only for him to claim her.

It is possible Mrs. Langer resented somewhat Benson's delay. It may be she considered decisive action of some sort or another necessary on her part to bring about decisive action on his. At any rate, he was fairly astounded one night to be told by the good lady that she was planning to go to New York for the winter.

"I want Eloise to have every advantage," she had stated in support of her move.

Now Benson, though astonished, was pleased. One reason that had delayed his own move to the City was a reluctance to leave Eloise behind, as well as a reluctance to make the definite step of taking her with him as a wife. Mrs. Langer's plan fitted in most admirably with his wishes. He was surprised he himself had not thought to make the suggestion long before.

He did not reveal his own plan of departure till after the Langers were safely settled in New York. He rather liked the delicate compliment to Eloise implied in the fact that his coming to the City could be attributed to his devotion to her.

"We are in a quiet, conventional little apartment house on Park Avenue," she had written. "Mother and I are hoping that you will settle near us."

Exactly what Benson expected to do! But there are influences which have to do with a man in spite of himself, cold, calculating business man though he be.

As Benson settled back comfortably in the Merchant's Limited, about to carry him to his New York triumphs, he was conscious of a feeling of fatigue. The winding-up of a career in one place and the transferring of it bodily to another require a mental effort the full measure of which he was now getting from the sense of how done up he really was. He closed his eyes and rested. Then as he felt the train speeding on its way, he aroused himself and looked about.

"By Jove, old Roddy!"

The words came from the chair next him which immediately revealed the blond, slight geniality of Eugene Brook. The two men had been college friends, the bond being the contrast of character and aims. This was their first meeting since the day they were graduated.

There followed a five hours' lounge that invited revelation. Brook had read of Benson's success.

"We all expected it, of course," he had laughed.

Roderick Benson was the theme at first, supplanted two hours later by that of Eugene Brook, by Brook himself.

"I'm painting, you know," he volunteered.

"I thought you wrote," said Benson.

"So I do—and sculp, too, when the mood's on. Money? Not a cent! Jove, but it's a great game!"

Benson showed a polite interest, which developed into a real one as Brook unfolded the experiences the last five years had brought him. It seemed like a new world to Benson, a world of strange lure for all the grotesque imagery of it. Eugene Brook was a graphic talker. Benson half closed his eyes and listened. Bohemia! New York's Bohemia! That was the theme.

Under his friend's vivid spell, he could see the men in their corduroys lounging in the cafés, the short-haired, sandaled women, their comrades. A world by itself, struggling, laughing, loving! Where people have real ambitions and sometimes are really hungry, and ask only to be allowed to go their own way of irresponsibility, deeming anything that has the sanction of a sensation an experience of moment. Gay, hapless, eternally youthful, and at once of a pathos and melancholy!

Benson felt himself almost capable of becoming sentimental on the subject. It was all so human, so different from the hard calculated life of business Boston where nothing but self was a recognized motive. Benson had never dreamed that he would be susceptible to this sort of thing. And yet, he had always liked Brook, though setting him down as something of a fool!

He was surprised at the eagerness he felt when Brook said casually as the train was pulling in:

"You must come down and see me. I'm on Twelfth Street. By the way, where are you stopping?"

"Nowhere," said Benson. "That is, I thought I'd go to the Biltmore till I could look around—"

"By Jove!" cried Brook, "Costell's trying to rent his place, best apartment in the vicinity—top floor—lots of air and light and atmosphere—"

II.

It was at a studio party at André Costell's two weeks later that Roderick Benson found himself a member, if a somewhat detached one, of that Bohemia the thought of which, ever since his meeting with Eugene Brook in the train, had held him in eager speculation. There were some fifty people present, a motley crew, smoking, arguing, laughing, drinking. There was a woman in riding costume side by side with a woman in exquisite evening dress. There was a Chinaman in native dress, a Hindoo dancer, the latest playwright. Someone played the piano.

"The finest artist in town—the very best," whispered the host to each, but no one listened.

There were cards in an ante-room, and rumor of dancing somewhere else. Nearly everyone was sitting on the floor.

The place itself was charming. Benson had hesitated in leasing it the day before, not from any lack of appreciation of it as an artistic setting, but because he wasn't perfectly sure how the Langers would view the matter. But then—every man must have something of a fling. Roderick Benson had been too busy up to the present time to take his—

He looked at the women one after another with careful scrutiny. "Children of nature," he said to himself. They seemed so artless it was most refreshing.

There was one girl in particular who might have been a child of nine. She was a tiny little creature with her dark hair cropped close. The eyes were bright, and constantly in motion like a bird's. But they had the power of softening to an appealing wistfulness as the long lashes lowered and veiled their brilliancy. Her gestures were spontaneous, simple. Benson was impressed with the idea that she was the sort to dangle on one's knee, as one dangled the children of one's best friend after the ritual of a family Sunday dinner.

As he stood at the doorway he was

conscious of the eyes of many of the women resting upon him. In such a crowd he was surprised the presence of a new comer should arouse even passing comment. One or two smiled invitingly. A burst of laughter in one corner attracted him. Costell and the birdlike little girl were looking at him, then as quickly looked away when he turned to meet their gaze. He was hoping Costell would manage to present the little lady. Then he was dragged into a card game where he succeeded in losing some money. An unheard-of thing for Roderick Benson but the thick smoke dulled his brain!

After supper, the little girl came and sat by him. She gave him a bright look.

"I've been noticing you all evening. You're new," she began.

"Yes," he smiled. "I can overcome it in time, however."

"Where do you live?" she queried as she helped herself to one of his cigarettes.

"The Biltmore temporarily," he answered.

"Oh!" She wrinkled her brows prettily into a semblance of disapproval. "How awful! Why *don't* you come down here to us?"

"I'm thinking of it!" he answered. "In fact, I may take this place here—"

She showed surprise, tinged with just the right degree of childish pleasure.

"Really?" she wondered. Then clapping her hands gleefully.

"Oh, but you *must*. It will be such fun! We'll teach you everything—take you everywhere—You—" she turned to him impetuously. "Decide right now. I'm so afraid if you stopped to think it over—say yes, please."

There was the oddest little appeal in the dark eyes that Benson found irresistible. He hesitated just long enough to make his eventual yielding of more value.

"Promise!" she urged.

"Yes, I promise," he said and she jumped up and took both his hands.

"You darling!" she cried, and he could have hugged her for her naïveté.

Theodora Winters the little lady turned out to be. Benson found this out at the end of the evening. She had liked his cigarettes.

"But where do you get them?" she had queried.

"I have them put up for me in Boston," he answered.

She showed herself disconsolate.

"But I'll send for some for you," he hastened to put in to brighten her disappointment.

"Really, will you?" she asked. "Initials and all?"

"Of course—but I don't know yet—"

"Oh!" she laughed. "Theodora Winters—"

"*The* Theodora Winters?" he put in. "I've followed some of your sketches—"

"Just Dodo to my friends," she smiled.

"And to me?"

She managed to snuggle her little hand into his at that.

"Dodo to you, too," she said softly.

III

RODERICK BENSON took the Costell Studio at a figure that seemed rather fabulous to him.

"But then—one has to pay for atmosphere, I suppose," he said to himself. "But I wonder how the devil most of these artists get by down here."

He found out very shortly, and it was Miss Theodora Winters who was mainly responsible for throwing light on the subject.

Theodora—Dodo, rather—took possession of Benson immediately upon his arrival in the village.

"I thought you might be lonely, so I came over for dinner," she announced simply the first night as she put up her lips ingenuously to be kissed.

Benson wished to heavens Kumari, his man, hadn't been looking on, but the thing couldn't be helped, so he pulled the kiss off with as great an air of unconcern as possible.

"I'll go and brush up a bit," she said,

and disappeared into the sanctity of the bathroom. Benson didn't dare meet Kumari's eye, so affected a semblance of ease by attempting to hum—

Dinner was a great success. So was the evening. Dodo played the piano, imitating everyone on Broadway. Then she rendered a telling imitation of various characters well-known in the district, usually encountered at near-by restaurants. At ten o'clock, she jumped up from the divan where she had been cuddling into Benson's arms and announced in a stentorian voice.

"Now we'll go over to the Brevoort!"

They dined at the Lafayette the next night, where their *tête-à-tête* became merged into another one at the next table. Tony Briehl and Lorelli Baxter, whom Dodo informed Benson he must call Lulu, were only too delighted to lose their identity and become his guests. Operations were transferred to his apartment after dinner, with the result of a fairly hilarious evening and a dinner date for the next night.

"Where?" asked Lulu in her high treble voice. "Somewhere gay!"

Dodo had been wrinkling her pretty brows.

"Sherry's," she brought out at last.

"Oh, I say," put in Tony, "nobody's dead. Who wants a funeral?"

"Well, if it's dead, it's dead swell!" said Dodo. "Yes, let's make it Sherry's, Roddy."

Benson had to admit himself aghast. He and Dodo had had a conversation but a few minutes before, while Tony and Lulu were playing a duet at the piano, as to snobs, and Benson had brought into play his most forceful English in his denunciation of them. He felt Dodo's sharp little eyes upon him, as if ferreting out the right cause for his hesitation, so what was there to do?

"All right, Sherry's," he said rather weakly, and the deal was closed.

Of course Dodo was *not* the sort of person one took to Sherry's. Dutch cut and all that might be *au fait* in the village, but— Benson blanched at the prospect of the next evening.

Dodo proved herself quite at home, however. She even showed that she knew the head waiter fairly well, so Benson drew the conclusion he was not the first she had handled in arranging an uptown party. They drifted afterwards from cabaret to cabaret with very material results as far as Dodo and Lulu went. There was a ten-dollar knitting-bag Dodo had to have at the Claridge. She didn't knit, but everybody was carrying that sort of bag in the street. It looked well in these days of crisis. Then there was a Cloisonné cigarette holder to go with the new cigarettes. And shoe buckles—Lulu did very well, too, even to a couple of Kewpies at five dollars apiece. There was an interested debate as to whether both should vaunt blue bows, or be differentiated with a variety of colors. At the last minute it was discovered Tony had been overlooked. It was such a nice party, Dodo said, everybody had to go home perfectly happy and contented, so Tony was eventually rewarded with a gold match-box.

"And what do I get?" asked Benson as they piled into the taxicab to go home.

Dodo opened her eyes wide at that.

"This," she said as she put her arms about his neck and laid her head sleepily on his shoulder. "Isn't it enough?"

"Quite," he answered, and if there was a tinge of sarcasm in his voice Dodo was too near asleep to get it.

IV

After the uptown party Benson did not need the interference of Eugene Brook to tell him that he was being done. When, two weeks later, Brook sauntered in one afternoon about five for a lounge and a smoke, Benson was able to meet him on the subject of Bohemia in general, Dodo in particular. The conclusions drawn showed Benson at his legal best.

Brook had opened up the subject rather nervously with, "See here, Roddy, I ought to warn you about—" It seemed only the graceful thing to

hesitate a second, considering the warning had to do with one of the fair sex.

"Dodo," put in Benson with a smile. Brook looked relieved.

"Of course, I might have known you'd see through it—she seems to be going it pretty hard in your direction—"

Benson nodded. "She is. But do you know *why* I stand for it? I enjoy watching her game, studying her little dodges and tricks. It amuses me."

Brook smiled. "Oh, well, if you're taking it that way, go ahead. She'll furnish plenty of sport— As for me, I'm something of an idealist, I suppose. I shut my eyes to all this sordid part of it and try to take everybody on the surface. I like to think Bohemia as wonderful as I painted it to you that day on the train. I shouldn't have gone it so strong, however, had I realized you were about to become one of us."

He laughed.

Benson shook his head. "Look out, Eugene. You idealists all get smashed up some time—these people down here are the hardest, most pitilessly selfish in the world."

Brook sighed.

"I suppose so," he said. "Perhaps it's because we artists are not of the world and recognize an antagonism in its laws. That's why we *do* people, in sort of self-defence. Get there first, you know."

Benson laughed. "A pretty theory."

Brook hesitated a minute. "Costell offered me a commission to persuade you to take this apartment. I couldn't do it, because—well—we're friends. You see? That's one point for Bohemia!"

"Agreed," said Benson.

"But—" and here Brook laughed heartily. "Dodo was less scrupulous!"

"Oh!" Benson started. Anger flared in him at first with the recollection of the pretty, impersonal interest Dodo had shown that first night. Then came a certain admiration for the keenness hidden so cleverly under the artlessness.

"The little devil!" he said.

"Oh, Dodo's past master of everything in that line. She hasn't a thing she's bought herself. There's a lovely bit going about now. You know Gibson, the uptown furriers. Jack wanted Dodo to design a costume for him for a ball at Delmonico's. He furnished the stuff, a particularly gorgeous piece of silk. Dodo forgot all about the thing, until Jack telephoned he was waiting to put the costume on. Dodo slashed the silk here and there and sent the shreds by messenger. Jack couldn't wear it, of course, and swore violently he'd settle Dodo."

"What happened?" put in Benson, amused.

"She walked into the store next morning, smiled at the manager, picked out a Kolinski stole and—

" 'Telephone Mr. Gibson. I'm Miss Winters, Theodora Winters. I designed a costume for Mr. Gibson—'

"That's the stole she's wearing."

Benson spent the next two evenings with the Langers, one a quiet one at their home, where he found the good taste and quiet strangely restful after his rather hectic experiences in the Square District. The second night he and Eloise went to the Opera. It was here that he encountered Thomas Stapleton, a man of the greatest influence on the Street and one who had already seen possibilities in Benson even in the short while he had been in town. The young people were duly invited to the Stapleton box and spent a delightful evening. Eloise was at her best; Benson watched her with a pride and appreciation intensified by contrast with an image that would persist in his mind in spite of himself, the image of Dodo.

As Benson said good night to Eloise, he almost brought himself to the decisive point of an avowal of his intentions. Eloise presented such a pretty picture as she stood there in her evening wraps, under the dim light of the hall chandelier. Her eyes looked into his almost with a look of expectancy. He took her hand, hesitated a minute and then said good night. Eloise failed

to arouse in him the dynamic of action; perhaps this was due to the fact there were no antagonistic impulses between them. Had he been less sure of his grounds, had sensed opposition, he would have been the quicker to act. Some outside influence would have to be brought to bear to force the issue between them. So much the better! Washington Square atmosphere was exactly the thing needed. It would be Dodo, eventually, who would bring about the desired dénouement; her sordid scheming would react to the ultimate advantage of the unsullied Eloise.

So Benson let things drift. One little scene with Dodo is perhaps typical of all scenes.

It was a stormy day. Benson had come home from the Street tired of business and had just settled himself comfortably on the divan by a big log fire, when Dodo was announced. She had on the Kolinski stole. For the first time, as he looked at her, Benson felt himself irritated about something. It wasn't so much anger with Dodo because she had intrigued to get the stole, as an unreasonable wrath against the man, Gibson, who had been brought to the point, even though unwillingly, of giving it to her. He wondered if she cared anything about the fellow. But no! Dodo would never care, really, about anyone.

Benson, in the beginning, had ascertained from Eugene Brook that Dodo, in spite of her reputation for fleecing the diverse men of her acquaintance, had retained a certain aloofness in her relation with them. Dodo would sit on a man's knee, cuddle up to him unconscionably, but then—"

"Of course," Brook had said, "no one would ever make real love to Dodo!"

"You mean," put in Benson with a certain resentment, "no one would want to?"

Eugene looked at him shrewdly. "No, indeed, I don't mean that. On the contrary, I can't imagine anybody *not* wanting to—"

Benson looked indifferent.

"Dodo *has* the charm. You can't have seen as much of her as you have without realizing that— It's just that there *is* a reserve—"

"You mean that underneath all her freedoms there is virtue adamant—"

Brook laughed. "Virtue, yes, I suppose it *is* virtue. An economical virtue with Dodo, however. She's figured it all out in her shrewd little way and it doesn't pay to be *not* virtuous. She's seen too many less clever go on the rocks—"

"But what becomes of people like Dodo in the end?" queried Benson.

Eugene shrugged. "Well, there's that man, Gibson; he has plenty of money—"

"You mean he'd *marry* her?" cried Benson in surprise.

Brook had risen at that point. "Why not?"

Then with a laugh. "You haven't completely shed, yet, your Boston snobbery."

Now as Dodo came into the room Benson thought of Brook's words as to the fellow Gibson. If Dodo married, she'd marry purely and simply for what the man could give her. It really *was* disgusting.

Dodo took off her things and sat down on the edge of the couch.

"Bring me a highball, Kumari," she called, and then settled herself to win Benson back to a good humor, for she had sensed in his greeting an indifferent mood.

"It's so nice to have a place like this to come to," she breathed with a sigh.

Then after a pause, "How much do you pay for it, Roddy?"

Benson sat up so that his eyes were on a level with hers. They looked at each other a full minute. The hard little look that came into Dodo's eyes the second she realized herself trapped was veiled by the long lashes to a drooping wistfulness.

"I like Costell, don't you?" she queried. "You know, he insisted on giving me a commission for this. It was such a surprise, but he said you said I'd

promised to show you around down here and that's why you took it." She paused.

"I needed the money at the time. There were so many things I wanted." She stole a look at Benson. "I bought that stole with the money—"

Benson took her by the shoulders and almost shook her.

"Now look here, Dodo—"

She looked at him and as she looked two big tears stole slowly down her cheeks.

"I know you've heard that ugly story about Jack Gibson. That's why I brought the subject up. It *isn't* true; I bought that stole."

Benson knew perfectly that she was lying, but she was such a tiny little thing and presented such a sorry picture of wronged innocence as she sat there he could not help but let his mood be softened. She saw him relenting and managed to get his arm around her somehow and her head on his shoulder. They sat looking into the fire.

Dodo finally heaved a great sigh. "It's dreadful for a girl to get by financially in town here. But I *don't* take presents from men. It's not good taste."

She paused to let him get the full effect of her words.

Then she continued: "Jack Gibson's always trying to give me things."

She turned her little head so she could look into his eyes. "You know, Roddy, you're the only one I let give me things. But you're different."

She managed to rub her lips across his with an effect that was somewhat startling to both.

There was a longer pause, then Dodo again, with her inimitable wavering little sigh, said: "He's trying to give me a rug now."

Benson got it, of course.

"You have the rug all picked out, I presume, Dodo!"

"Oh, no!" she answered brightly. "But there *is* one at Donchian's that—"

When Dodo was leaving, Benson wanted to call a taxi, but Dodo was firm. With a written letter of credit to Donchian & Co. clutched in one hand, she felt herself capable of a renunciation that was not without its element of the heroic.

"No," she said with all the melancholy of self-denial, "I'll walk, even if it *is* raining!"

V

After Dodo had gone Benson set himself to a legal analysis of his mood —that is, of Dodo, for Dodo and his moods were becoming so entangled the one was fast becoming the other. The best man friend he had ever had was a lawyer who had beaten him in the one big case he had ever lost. His regard for Dodo as a versatile tactician had in it something of the admiration he had, from the minute of his legal defeat, bestowed upon his opponent. It was positively an intellectual stimulus to study Dodo in her quick turns and stratagems, now artless and ingenuous, now of a subtlety that often escaped his own quick perceptions. It was good mental gymnastics just to be with her.

There was another side, however, that was disconcerting. He had become so used to Dodo that the thought of discarding her was rather a painful one. It was like turning out of doors a dog or cat that has in some unaccountable way managed to find a place in your affections. That Dodo must be discarded sooner or later was inevitable. Benson felt himself for the first time in his existence in sympathy with the man who supports a double *ménage*. He could see himself respectably married to Eloise, who would reign superbly over an uptown establishment and entertain his Stock Exchange friends; he could see also a little place like the one he now occupied, with Dodo ready to welcome him with her bright little look and to snuggle against him in the firelight. But then, why act yet? Spring would bring of itself a solution, perhaps. In the meantime, there was Dodo, and there was Eloise to react to.

Spring found Benson a fairly promi-

nent man on the Stock Exchange. He had impressed Thomas Stapleton from the beginning as one whose keenness of perception and ready co-ordination of thought and action would eventually redound to the advantage of those connected with him, with the result that in March Benson had been made a business member of the Stapleton firm. Subsequent events proved Stapleton's trust well placed.

Mrs. Stapleton's interest in Eloise was also another point of advantage, so that, all in all, Benson could pronounce himself at the end of the winter as a very lucky dog. Chance had played decidedly into his hands.

June came, and with it the realization to Benson that his lease of the Costell apartment was up. Action of one sort of another was inevitable. The morning of his last day's occupancy of the place arrived. It was one of those cold, cheerless spring days that, instead of inspiring one with that joy of things just beginning, brings with it a strange feeling of finality, as if everything that had made for well-being during the winter were about to pass away forever. On Benson's dresser were a dozen photographs, all of Dodo—Dodo in a Pierrot's costume, Dodo as a Nautch girl, Dodo dressed as a baby. A dozen pairs of eyes were leveled upon him as he stood there tying his necktie, a dozen pairs and yet all the same eyes with their odd, childish appeal and deep down the hard kernel of Dodo's calculating little soul. She had worked him to her heart's content during the past months; he had given in each time with a mingled feeling of chagrin at his own defeats, admiration for her intriguing ability and above all a strange resentment that he could not establish himself in her eyes as something other than a source of benefits. There had been no lovemaking with Dodo. She came to him at any hour, settled in his arms, brushed her lips across his and then was gone. He would have preferred it otherwise, for the sex in him asserted itself more and more as time went on. The "double *ménage*" was fast becoming a thing clearly formulated in his mind. He had given in to Dodo in little things throughout; the time had come when he was about to assert the will that was in him and to settle this big issue to suit his own pleasure. He had conquered Wall Street, why not Dodo?

The morning presented a wild market. There had been something very close to a panic due to some foreign news of startling import, but in the confusion of it all Benson managed a deal that wrested from even the most seasoned men on the Exchange a gasp of admiration. The firm of Stapleton scored; so did Benson with extravagant results.

Thomas Stapleton pressed his hand when it was all over.

"You must dine with us tonight, you and Eloise, to celebrate."

But Benson felt himself suddenly tired. He drew his hand across his eyes.

"Honestly, I'd rather you'd make it tomorrow night. I am suddenly down."

He went directly home. Kumari was packing.

"Don't," he said irritably. "I want to think. I want to rest. I'm tired out."

He threw himself on the divan.

"A whiskey and soda!" he said and then lay quite still, staring at the ceiling.

The morning's success had brought but a sharper realization of the finality of the existence he was leading. It was over, and the cut and dried routine of a successful, happily married, wealthy business man stretched ahead. Eloise! He could see her, graceful and beautiful, with that look of expectancy and worship in her wonderful eyes.

Then came a pang of desire, quickened by tired nerves. Dodo! By God! He'd beat her this time, make her his! Why not? What future had a little waif like Dodo, anyway? And he could give her everything. No one need know! Hundreds of men were doing likewise! His thoughts seethed. Eloise was going out of town soon. He and

Dodo could have the long summer months together.

Then suddenly he was conscious of a door opening, and Dodo was there in the flesh. He struggled to his feet and put out his arms. Dodo threw herself in them with a little sob that made her yielding the sweeter. For the first time the embrace was of an unrestrained intensity, and Benson found himself kissing the eyes, with their long, wet lashes with an abandon he had never known himself capable of. It was going to be easy, far easier than he had ever anticipated. Dodo was, after all, but a woman who was giving in to the demands of her nature. She undoubtedly loved him, had loved him all along, but had hidden it in her queer little way. He found himself murmuring, "Dodo, darling!" over and over again as he smoothed her tousled hair.

Then came wonder at her tears.

"What is it, dear?" he whispered.

"I have been put out," she cried. "I couldn't pay the rent. I have been struggling and struggling, but I didn't want you to know. The man who buys my pictures has been trying to make love to me and I—I—I couldn't let him, so he wouldn't buy any more and sometimes I—I go hungry—"

Dodo poured out her confession, the more pathetic for its incoherence. Benson breathed deep; chance had played into his hands this time so completely the triumph was robbed a little of the zest it might have had, had his own faculties achieved it.

"Dodo," he said seriously, "I'm glad this happened. I want you to give me the right always to—to—"

He faltered a little and then caught himself up as with an appreciation of the fairness of his offer—"always to look out for you," he finished with decision.

She raised the dark eyes quickly to his.

"Roddy, you mean you *love* me?" she cried.

"Of course, dear. And do *you* love me?" he asked playfully.

Her only answer was a kiss that would have dispelled all doubt in the mind of any man.

Then she turned away with a sigh.

"We *could* be married at once, I suppose?" she queried.

Their eyes met. There was a full minute's tense conflict of wills. Dodo never flinched. Benson was the first to break down. He turned to the fireplace and busied himself with the lighting of his pipe. Dodo's eyes never left him.

"When you will," he brought out at last, coolly.

Dodo rose. Nothing more was said. As Benson helped her into her coat and adjusted the Kolinski stole a newspaper fluttered from somewhere to the floor, an extra, the startling headlines of which flaunted the day's panic. His own name headed the list of those who had plunged successfully.

"Oh!" said Benson and started back a step.

"I found it down in the hall," explained Dodo. "It was so dark I couldn't see whether it was yours or not, so I brought it along anyway. What's the news?" she asked and tried to peer over his shoulder.

Benson turned and violently crushed her in his arms, his coolness giving way to a wave of violent emotional reaction.

"Clever, clever Dodo!" he muttered, as he kissed her passionately. "I love you, for you are cleverer than I am!"

Her only answer was to veil her eyes to innocent wonder as she pressed against him.

NEVER PRESS A PROVERB TOO FAR

By Douglas Turney

"MISS HENDERSON, you will have to retype this letter. It is filled with errors. You really must be more careful in your work."

Into the eyes of Thelma Henderson, generally considered the most stupid of the entire stupid stenographic force of James & James, Attorneys at Law, came a look of semi-satisfied longing as she reached out her hand to take from that of the junior partner the sheet of notepaper he was extending in her direction. As she took it, her thumb and forefinger met over the little finger of Harrington James, who almost wrenched that member from her grasp, so oblivious was she to what she had done or so slow to bring a cessation to her apparent awkwardness once she had realized it—if she did.

Momentary anger was suceeded by forbearance in the expression of James' face as, with a belated begging of his pardon, Miss Henderson went back to her desk and began click-tapping on her typewriter.

In a few moments, she returned to his desk with a letter-perfect copy. He read it hastily but thoroughly and signed it.

"Why didn't you write it correctly in the first place, since you have just proved that you know how to spell and punctuate?" he asked.

"I don't know. I didn't. I asked one of the girls," she replied in a staccato manner.

Harrington James knew that she was lying in all three of her brief declarations, but he did not tell her so. He merely looked at her as if she were a sort of feminine rebus, to which he would not give enough time to try to solve, although he would have been mildly interested if the answer had been available in the back of the book.

II

THELMA HENDERSON had arrived at the offices of James & James early one morning and had waited several hours before the junior partner, who engaged the employes and who, incidentally, was the only one in command that day, as his father was out of the city, could find time to admit to his presence a woman who had come without an appointment.

"Do you need any stenographers?" she asked, the moment she was within his private office, with the door safely closed.

He looked at her too large hat, with its outrageous ostrich plumes of black, in bizarre contrast to her strangely yellow hair; at her too large mouth, which, partly open, disclosed her too large teeth; at her too thin neck. Then his eyes discovered a wart on the right side of her nose and clung to it.

"I haven't advertised for any," he replied, vainly trying to take his eyes off the blemish.

"Haven't you?" she asked. "I didn't know."

"How did you happen to come here to apply?"

"I needed a job. I had to come some place."

His eyes still focused on the wart. He was a fairly good judge of beauty and none of his stenographers had imperfections other than of the brain. He was preparing to refuse her a position, but first he wanted to achieve a triumph of mentality over ugliness by forcing his eyes to look at something else than

the excrescence beside her right nostril.

With an effort he forced his eyes to look into hers. He was surprised and softened to see what seemed to be tears surrounding pupils of an indeterminate bluish-grey. How could he know that her eyes were always watery?

"Are you experienced?"

"Some."

"Where did you work last?"

"In Watts."

"Where?"

"In Watts, a little town near Los Angeles."

"Why didn't you say Los Angeles?"

"Because I worked in Watts."

"That seems a thoroughly good reason. Have you any references?"

"I had some. I threw them away."

"That was rather foolhardy. What was the idea?"

"Well, Watts is so far away. Nobody would know whether they were genuine. I can write them over again if you want to see them."

"You needn't mind. How old are you?"

"Do I have to tell?"

"You don't have to, but I feel that I have a right to know something about the firm's employes. I am asking quite impersonally."

"I'm—I'm thirty."

His eyes traversed her thin neck, lingering on its wrinkles.

"Hm."

She reddened.

"I need work," she said.

His eyes jumped to her wart. He forced them to look into her eyes. The moisture that he thought was tears decided him. Perhaps she was in great trouble.

"All right," he said. "When can you begin?"

"Now."

So he summoned his chief clerk and turned her over to him.

III

THAT night at dinner, Harrington James told his wife about the addition to his force of stenographers.

"I am afraid she will be terrible—as terrible as she is ugly," he said. "Although she came from Southern California she didn't have enough sense to say her home was Los Angeles, but named some little nearby town, Watts, I believe."

Mrs. James laughed.

"Oh, that place!" she exclaimed. "I remember it. I even passed through it once that winter I was west with father and mother. Why, Watts is the joke town of the entire southwest. Anything awful that happens is laid on Watts."

"Well, she's about the most awful thing that could happen there or anywhere."

"And she admitted she came from Watts?"

"She not only admitted it—she flaunted it. She ought to be shot for her stupidity!"

"Oh, that's too mild a punishment. If you want to give her the limit, send her back."

"I daresay she will go back soon enough. Meantime, however, I feel sorry for her. Her eyes were filled with tears when she asked for a job. She will have to be allowed to work for a time, anyway. A man can't let a woman starve when he knows. I fear she's in need or in trouble of some kind."

IV

THAT same night Thelma Henderson sat in her own little bedroom and communed with herself.

"Here I am with another job," she mused. "I hope I can keep it longer than has been my bad fortune lately. I'll have to tone my methods down a bit, I guess. There was a certain pitcher that went to the well too often. One should never press a proverb too far—it might prove itself true. Still it isn't my fault that I am not exactly beautiful. And I like to have a little masculine attention, just the same as other women. It's better to seem dense than to be entirely isolated. My cunning little ways may not be precisely the best ones, but . . ."

She gave her watery optics treatment with boracic acid in an eyebath that she knew would be quite useless, brushed her too yellow hair ninety-nine times and crawled into bed.

V

DON'T misunderstand Thelma. She knew what she was about. She always had known what she was about. Almost from her very beginning, when, a puling, crying woman-child, she struggled in her mother's arms, the noisy, troublesome evidence of her parents' foolishness, she seemed to be thoroughly cognizant of what she was doing. She lacked, in her girlhood, that mournful joy of misunderstanding herself and of believing that others did likewise. She had never known that delight. She eventually concluded that she was entirely too intimate with herself—that her mind was as familiar to her as the unbeautiful face she infrequently saw in a mirror—and she devoutly wished that it were otherwise—that she yet might find within herself some mystery she could not solve.

Instead, her self-intimacy increased. With adolescence, she quickly comprehended the slight—really, that is too euphemistic—the minus appreciation that boys had for her. She saw how her ugliness eliminated her. And she tried to surmount its barrier. But she failed. She could not even find a way around, as philosophers advise. And she grieved for a time, as girls will.

Then some hope came to her when she read in a book of maxims, collected by some person for whose idle hands Satan found mischief, that knowledge is power. Foolish virgin that she was, she believed it at the time and set about to collect that which she was then convinced would bring her the quality which would enable her to sway alike the mind and heart of man. She learned many pieces of useless information. She gleaned from odd sources such data as the population of the Japanese empire, the number of words in the English language, the progress of tuberculosis among the American Indians, the legend of the fuchsia, the invention of the cotton gin, the length of the Atlantic cable, the last words of John Adams, the advice of Horace Greeley to young men, the year gold was discovered in California, the distance between Baltimore and Buenos Aires, the name of the woman who owned the cow which kicked over the lamp, lantern or whatever it was that started the Chicago fire, the railroads which forced their patrons to travel behind engines which burned soft coal, the area in acres of Greater New York, and only Thelma herself and her Maker, if He interested Himself in her activities, know what else.

But she proved the old maxim—or at least her interpretation of it—a fallacy. How could she acquire power over man by acquiring knowledge of facts?

At first she did not realize her error, but, with a decoy in the form of the latest official statistics on the New Orleans cotton market, she tried to accomplish what a pretty girl easily could do by the simple display of a dimple—or an ankle. Of course she failed. What man cares for that kind of figures in girls?

When her well of information proved its anti-magnetic qualities, she said, "To the dickens with knowledge," and looked about her for another means of bringing men to her No. 7 shoes. One thing she had read made this new course easy for her. It was that trite old phrase, "Men don't care for brains in women." She concluded it was true. But what was she to do, then? Be giddy or helpless or—?

She tried giddiness.

"If I had a million dollars," she said one hot afternoon to a young man she had managed to corner for the moment, "I'd spend it all on ice cream cones. Think how nice it would be to ride around in an automobile, distributing them to the poor girls in department stores who haven't the time to go out and buy them for themselves!"

"Wouldn't it—nit!" he answered,

disgustedly, hastily excusing himself from her company.

In the solitude his departure left, Thelma blushed.

"Goodby, giddiness," she said. "Now to be helpless."

She took her suitcase and walked about two blocks from her home and took a position on a corner where she gazed this direction and that, as if she were a stranger in doubt as to how to find the way. Finally, at the approach of a young man whose face and manner appealed to her, she ventured to assume an air of timidity.

"I—I beg your pardon," she began, falteringly, "but can you direct me to 68 Westover street? I'm not familiar with the city and I've walked so far trying to find it. And I'm so tired, with this heavy old suitcase."

He looked at her face and then away.

"You're headed the right way," he responded, briefly. "You'll find your number about two blocks up."

He passed along, hurriedly.

Thelma picked up her empty suitcase and started for home, convinced that ugliness and helplessness were never meant for boon companions.

What, then, should her next move be?

Ah ha, she had it! She would be witty! She thought up a few remarks that she believed would pass as "bright" and tried them out.

A man mentioned automobiles in her hearing.

"I'd like to have a machine," she began, breaking into the conversation, for she had a slight—very—acquaintance with him, "but I keep a horse for a stall."

But motorcars were so much more interesting than her pun that it won her not even a smile.

Again, when there were cucumbers and a male guest at dinner, she refused the former, saying:

"I like cucumbers, but they are so cucumbersome to the stomach."

He didn't even try to laugh.

"If you find them indigestible, you are wise in avoiding them," he said, turning to answer a remark from her father.

Thelma had brains enough to know her attempt had been weak, but she had noticed pretty girls cause almost uncontrollable mirth from infinitely less sparkling witticisms.

She learned, though, that it was not for her. Still, why have brains if they were not to be used? There must be some way she could use them, apply them to her own dire needs. Why not utilize them in being dull? Men thought themselves superior to women, anyway. Why not strengthen that belief? Maybe that was the way to husbandry.

In her high school days, she had studied stenography and she decided to burnish that knowledge a bit and see what taking dictation would do for her. At least she would escape from the home life which at her age was irksome. Her mother daily annoyed her with queries as to why she did not achieve the state of matrimony she had long vainly sought, and her aged father, although too paternal to voice it, always seemed to have in his eyes the question her mother frankly asked.

"I don't believe any man will ever marry me," she admitted to herself, finally casting away all reluctance to concede her utter ugliness, "but perhaps I can manage, by working, to be near one—to have him speak to me once in a while of his own volition."

She softened the hours of drudgery required to freshen her skill at shorthand by visualizing and auditizing the future, in which, as the secretary, or, if not that, at least trusted employee, of some fairly handsome man in the commercial or professional field, she sat near him, taking down in modern hieroglyphics the materialistic phrases which reached her ears by way of his rich baritone voice.

Her first position was with a half-blind attorney in the little town of Watts. He was as nearly dead as he was blind and the facial appearance of his stenographer made no difference to him. He could not have enjoyed beauty had he been able to see it. He

lacked enough animalism to demand it, to sense it or even to respond to it.

Eventually he died and Thelma, who had saved her money, went east—with studied stupidity as her motto.

VI

THEN she succeeded in adding herself to the office force of James & James. That she was not regarded there as a distinct adjunct was as manifest to Thelma as was her apparent dullness to everybody else, for her brains were improving with her efforts to conceal them. Even the most oafish of the other women considered Thelma's mind as of a positively minus quality and pitied any person who, because the other stenographers were already busy, might have to dictate anything to her.

Thelma knew enough to go to work on time. Often she arrived before the official hour for beginning her duties in the hope that she might greet some early masculine worker with a smile obscured by the wart and her watery eyes. That it was so obscured was a fact, not her intention. She was willing to endure much to hear a masculine voice address her. With such a possibility ahead the day she made longer by taking up her labors before it was necessary seemed short indeed to her. Besides—and it was a happy moment for her when the idea vaulted into her mind—by being early she could extend her hand in morning welcome to any trouser-wearer from the lowest office boy to the senior partner himself. And she liked to touch men's hands.

Through pity for her and fear that she might want, Harrington James retained her on the payroll and, because his father and their underlings cordially disliked dictating their correspondence and legal matters to Thelma, he kindly took up that cross himself.

The resultant near intimacy which she hoped she could make herself believe existed between the junior partner and herself was the most ambrosiac period of her entire life. She warmed herself in his masculine presence, she glowed at the sound of his voice, she gloried at the occasional touch of his hand that she managed to effect in giving documents to or taking them from him.

At times she almost forgot to be stupid.

One day he was preparing a paper which he was to read at a dinner of the bar association. Its subject was divorce, which he was treating with a seriousness worthy of the most hardened minister of the gospel in the late early seventies.

"One of the principal causes of divorce," he was dictating, "in fact, I may say THE principal cause of divorce is—"

"Marriage," suddenly interrupted Thelma.

He looked his astonishment at what he considered and hoped she also would be brought to consider, through his look, as presumption on her part.

"Did you speak, Miss Henderson?"

"No, I coughed," she answered. "I have a bad cold. I'll try not to let it interrupt you again."

Thelma feared she had approached too near the epigrammatic for one of her known stupidity and she watched for an opportunity to identify herself with the sphere she chose to make her own.

It came rapidly.

"I may say the principal cause of divorce," Mr. James resumed his dictating, "is treason to the marriage vow. The man who forgets or ignores the sacred oath he takes at the altar of Hymen is no better than that vile traitor, Benedict Arnold—"

"Oh, Mr. James," Thelma interrupted again, "you mustn't speak ill of the dead."

"Miss Henderson," said her employer, "kindly refrain from interrupting. I am preparing this paper, not you."

This did not displease Thelma. Far from it. While surely establishing herself as a fool in the junior partner's estimation, she also had achieved direct

personal attention from him. It was a triumph.

It occurred to her that by petty annoyances she could attain perhaps an almost perpetual place in Mr. James' thoughts, if only as a nuisance. She mapped out a career filled with mistakes in every letter she typed for him so that she could enjoy the pleasure of being reprimanded for them and could follow that by the joy of calling his attention to the second copy which she would sedulously make perfect in spelling and punctuation.

VII

THELMA did occupy a prominent position in Mr. James' thoughts. He regarded her as a distinct incubus and pity for himself for having taken on a mental load analogous to the physical one endured by Sindbad on his famous tour with The Old Man of the Sea began to oust the pity he had at first felt for her.

He often spoke of her to Mrs. James.

"She is growing positively unendurable," he declared one night. "I never saw such an idiotic person before —man or woman. I didn't think it was possible for a person of her calibre even to learn stenography. She does and says the most unbelievable things. And clumsy! She never hands me a letter to sign that she doesn't touch my hand in some way. Still, she fascinates me negatively."

"Be careful," warned Mrs. James, in a killjoyous manner, as "fascinate," to her, always seemed a positive and never a negative verb. "She'll become a vice to you and you'll first endure and then pity and then embrace her, as all men are supposed to do their stenographers —especially the last."

"Never fear," he responded. "I'm reversing part of that and the remainder will never come to pass. I pitied her at first and now I am enduring her. And as for embracing, well, if a man experienced a sexual attraction toward all the ugly women he meets, he wouldn't have time for anything else."

Mrs. James, who was quite pretty, laughed.

"Besides," her husband continued, "I am preparing to be free of her. I doubled her wages today."

"That's a strange way of showing displeasure, I must say."

"I want her to have enough in her pay envelope for her to lay something by for a rainy day. When I think she has, I'll make it rain."

"I never heard of such a crazy idea! I believe her stupidity is catching and that you have contracted it. You'll never get rid of her that way. She may be a fool, but she will never believe otherwise than that you like her and her work when her pay is doubled."

VIII

MRS. JAMES was right. Thelma, upon receipt of her doubled salary, offered her employer her thanks, while she congratulated herself upon the success of her campaign. And she spent the extra money on clothes. But these, as Mr. James was true to the traditions of his sex, were unnoticed by him, but he could not escape Thelma's increased efforts to attract his attention by her seeming weakness of mind.

As her errors increased, so did his irritation.

And at last he decided to tell her the old familiar story about a necessary decrease in the number of employes, with the unhappy ending that as she was "the last one on, she must logically be the first one to go."

"I hope there was nothing wrong with my work," she said at the conclusion of the tale which he narrated to her one Saturday morning, trying to soften it as much as possible with a week's pay in advance in lieu of a week's notice.

"Not at all," he responded, courteously, but untruthfully.

"Then why let me go, since you like it, especially as I have been practically your personal stenographer?"

Thelma was eager to continue to receive his attention, even to the last of

their relations as employer and employe.

"I feel that is the fair way with the other girls," he replied, wondering why she could not accept her fate without cavil.

"I am willing to work for less."

"No, I don't want you to do that," he said. "I doubled your pay just to give you a chance to prepare for this. I hope you have a snug sum laid away to keep you till you get another position."

"Oh, yes," said Thelma, who had only the week's advance which lay before her on Mr. James' desk, from which she as yet had refrained from taking it.

"Well, then—"

"But I really haven't," she said, realizing the mistake she had made through her previous lie.

It should be remembered that Thelma was not in love with her employer. She was merely in love with the attention she had, by her imperfections of mind and body, extracted from him, as would his motorcar, had he been foolish enough to own one which became noticeably out of order.

"Why, it would be illogical to let me go when I offer to work for less," she declared, in a sudden, desperate, argumentative mood. "Surely you, a prominent attorney, can see that."

He assumed the cold, polished-marble manner for which he was known in court.

"Why be illogical?" demanded Thelma, wildly.

"In some cases," he answered, Wildesquely, "only illogical persons are logical."

IX

In her room some hours later, Thelma looked into her mirror, as all women, even the most hideous, do in the depths of soul-travail.

"That last trip to the well certainly smashed the pitcher," she told herself. "But Hell's bells!"—she smiled as sadly as it was possible for her as she realized she had unwittingly used her father's favorite expletive—"I shouldn't have said that, but I'll say it anyway. Hell's bells! I'm desperate. I'm not beautiful and therefore I can't be profitably wicked. I've simply got to do something. Why not get a new pitcher and go to a new well? I'm desperate, desperate, desperate!"

She moved away from the mirror.

"I can't think when I look at myself," she went on with her musings. "And I guess nobody else can. Why not go back to first principles?"

She put on her hat and coat and went out into the howling winter night.

Ten days later the *Evening Telegram* carried this brief news story, neatly tucked away in a corner of an inside page:

MYSTERIOUS WOMAN ANNOYS BLIND MAN

Sightless News-Vender Tells Odd Tale To Police

"Blind Mike," who sells newspapers for a living, found the way to Central station today and there told Captain Monahan that for the last week he had been greatly annoyed by a strange woman who endeavored to persuade him to take her into partnership.

"She interferes with my business," said the blind man. "She takes hold of my hand and tells me how much better we could do together. She's too loving. I won't have her or any other woman hanging around my corner. If you people can't stop her, I'll lay her out with my cane."

The only clew the police could find to the woman's identity, as the blind man said he knew nothing of her, except that she had suddenly appeared at the corner where he sells papers and began her importunings for a partnership in his newspaper trade, was a very yellow hair they found on his coat-sleeve.

GRIEF

By Reynolds Baine

I AM consumed by grief.

* * *

My best friend is dead.

Yesterday he was thrown from a runaway horse and killed.

It was I who opened the door when his grooms brought his body home.

As I looked down at his blood-stained face and torn clothes, I wondered if I ever should have another friend who would love me as he had.

He had never suspected me of being so base as to make love to his wife in his absence.

The very moment of the tragedy I had been bending over her, my lips near hers.

I thought how wantonly I had betrayed the trust of my best friend.

* * *

I am consumed by grief.

Now that the obstacle has been removed, my love no longer fascinates me.

YOUTH

By Bertha Bolling

OH, days that go as birds that sing,
Up-winging toward the sun,
Leave me your joy for garnering
When the glad song is done.

When sunset fires are burning low
Along the quiet West,
And 'gainst the dimming afterglow
There hangs an empty nest!

When the great flight of silvern wings
Is lost, beyond the blue;
And I sit, 'mid the lonely things
Of age; and dream of you!

INVESTIGATOR PAYNE IN HAWES STREET

By John C. Cavendish

I

"YOUR work to date," said Special Agent Melchiorri, "has been completely satisfactory."

As customary, he did not look at Investigator Payne, but past him, through him almost, at the dirty, blue-tinted wall of the room he occupied in the Federal Building.

"I have never had the good fortune to direct you before, Payne, but evidently you know how to go about this business."

"Thank you," said Payne, dully.

"Proceed on the lines you are following. I'm convinced that you'll get some positive evidence against this Hawes Street group. As I've said to you before, it's one of those not unusual cases where, while we are certain among ourselves a real danger exists, we have yet no grounds to make any arrests. You understand that, Payne?"

"Exactly," said Payne.

"Good enough, then. Whatever plots this group may develop, permit them to come to a head. Our best card, you can see, is to apprehend them in some definite act."

Investigator Payne removed his unfashionable hat from the floor and stood up. Like a piece of statuary, his heavy figure seemed for a second inert and incapable of motion. The illusion vanished as he shifted one foot backward.

"Yes, that's all," said the Special Agent.

The Investigator muttered a good night and moved toward the door. He closed it after him meticulously and walked unhurried out of the suite of rooms occupied by the Department of Justice. It was a little early, but still, not too soon for his appearance in Hawes Street. Assemblage there was governed by no special hours.

As Payne, the Investigator, thought of this pilgrimage, something like a flush seemed to touch his cheeks. No one of the crowd through which he passed remarked it, and yet the phenomenon was unusual. Ordinarily he lived through the dangers of his profession with a pronounced stolidity. It was surprising that tonight his movements betrayed a subtle excitement.

As he walked slowly, with just the phantom of nervousness in his customarily phlegmatic gait, one who knew his immediate purpose and achievement might have found excellent reason to congratulate him. Payne had accomplished the most difficult part of a hazardous inquiry. That is, he had effected an entrance into the councils at Hawes Street. In getting himself thus accepted as one of the group, as an adherent of the Cause, he had employed a formidable patience. But now, no one in Hawes Street suspected Payne. He was received there as a convert, useful, but doubtless somewhat stupid.

The Investigator was walking now along unsavory streets. On almost every corner men of disreputable appearance pushed themselves through swinging doors and the windows of these places gleamed from the reddish lights within like the unblinking fires of sinister altars.

Payne turned heavily into Hawes Street, disentangling himself without spoken comment from a sudden collision with a ragged child, who ran off

down the street bent on some inscrutable purpose.

Before the stained front of a tall, brick house he paused a brief moment, tilting his head back to look up at the dark windows.

His inspection was done in a second. Then without alacrity he went up three marble steps, worn into hollows by the erosion of unnumbered feet, and opened the door.

II

A JETTY hall swallowed him, like an omnivorous monster of darkness. Still, Payne could be heard to move impassively through the gloom, and in a moment came the unconcealed sound of his feet, ascending in the darkness a flight of stairs.

He climbed steadily, making turns at three landings, until on the fourth of the floors he moved through a corridor, musty with phantom smells. At the first door the even drum-tap of his footsteps ceased and in another second Payne turned a key in the lock over the knob.

As he came into the room, the five who were there looked up at him, a man with black, rumpled hair and a dirty face grunted, the others accepted his presence without greeting. The Investigator blinked a moment in the light from a lamp with an improvised card-board shade, and surveyed then the persons in the room.

All were present, except the Pole, Teodor Karzenowski, who at best was irregular. Payne's eyes passed over the face of the dirty man, Shaw, who greeted him, and saw the amorphous bulk of the Jew, Polinsky, hunched up in his chair like an evil sack, and drunk as ordinary. These did not count. There were, then, the two women—and Martin.

Bianca—the flaring Bianca—talked with Martin, who listened to her with his heavy brows drawn down dramatically. And Mélie cut the pages of a pamphlet with an incongruously bright paper knife, listening also.

The lymphatic, scrutinizing eyes of the Investigator rested droopingly at last upon Mélie, passing from her white, nerveless hands to her pallid face, that seemed to fall a little under the oppressive weight of her profuse, jetty hair. There was something almost startling in these intense, dyed coils; they were astonishingly lavish and the texture of them strong, like heavy silk. The extravagance of that black profusion gave the singular impression of a sable efflorescence, as if it had drawn into its own exuberant vigor all the passions and energies of the woman it crowned.

Mélie did not look at him, her eyes were charged only with the apprehension of Bianca and Martin, who spoke their thoughts intensely. Bianca's titian head was inclined forward, color flared in her cheeks like daubs of bright rouge, but with none of the immobility of paint. She was a tiger lily, not more striking than Mélie, but infinitely more flamboyant.

Payne crossed the room now and seated himself noiselessly upon a chair to the left of Mélie from which he could scrutinize her profile like a white night-flower underneath her midnight hair. His observation was steady and unblinking, but had no effect whatever upon Mélie. It was as if he were some stolid ghost in the company, unseen by her.

"There appears to be a cycle," Martin was saying. He looked at Bianca with his knit brows and then straight off into space. Each of his sentences came from his lips with impressive stress.

"But that cycle," he continued, "is more in the nature of a series of rings drawn on paper, that touch each other, but move, nevertheless, to a constantly fresh portion of the sheet. Is it not so, comrades?"

A grunt came from Shaw's streaked face, and on the heels of it a tense "Yes!"

It was Mélie who had made the affirmation.

"Good!" said Martin. "We observe then this apparent cycle: aristocracy

increases to a certain high tide of strength and influence, which carries with it at the same time a high tide of oppression. That influence then becomes self-destructive, in the inevitable revolt of the people—the strong men among whom overthrow the current aristocrats. And these strong men themselves become the new order of aristocracy, themselves to be overthrown. It seems endless, eh?"

He bent his dramatic gaze upon Bianca, who with flaming cheeks nodded.

"But not so! For with each new usurpation of power a certain number of the people make that recognition to which *we* subscribe—that is, the danger of *all* power. So the final strength will lie in our hands, the strength to free all men from the tyranny of authority."

He ceased speaking suddenly and arose in an instant from his chair, his brow cut with the lines of a feral frown. like the sinister furrows drawn on a tragic mask.

At his impulsive movement Mélie turned in her chair, dropping the bright paper-stiletto, which stuck, point down, in the floor, swaying there in gleaming oscillation. The Investigator leaned over, plucking it like an evil flower, and transferred the blade to the table. Revealed now as a large and impressive presence, Martin paced beside the table, while the eyes of all the company, save Polinsky, who was in a stupor, momentarily claimed him.

Mélie sat in her chair with her arms hanging straight down, her face as ever drooping a little under the weight of her exuberant hair. Bianca gripped the edges of the table with her hands, as if about to push herself forward for a spring.

The Investigator stared at the Hawes Street leader stolidly.

"We must strike!"

Blaring these words, Martin ceased his tigerish pacing.

There followed a foreboding silence, that in that dim and shoddy room was somehow vast, like the portentous calm of the sea and sky before a typhoon. The comatose breathing of Polinsky could be heard, until Mélie spoke.

Her voice sounded in a knife-like sharpness, low and harsh.

"Who?" she asked.

Martin re-seated himself and the tension of the previous moments seemed to uncoil.

"We must discuss that," he said quietly. "But it doesn't much matter. At any authority; at any symbol of it. Comrades, we have passed the point of discussion. We know our position. Is that not true?"

There were assenting murmurs and silence again.

Once more it dissolved in confused speech as the company simultaneously offered suggestions for the object of their initial blow. Polinsky awoke and muttered the name of the man who employed him; each of the others had a choice—even Payne the Investigator, who considered it necessary to say something. He thereafter appeared to forget the momentous turn of the evening in a fresh contemplation of Mélie, whose nacreous cheeks glowed faintly with two spots of red.

In the subdued turmoil, Martin was silent, his hands fumbling the folded sheets of a newspaper dropped on the table. But as Bianca's voice began to dominate—her special animosity was directed against the figures of the judiciary—he suddenly lifted this paper, holding it out in his clenched hands like a symbol.

"This!" he exclaimed.

No one spoke now, and once more there was tense expectancy.

"Let us strike first," he said, "the mouth-piece of authority!"

He shook the paper in his hands with a feline animosity.

"The newspapers!" exclaimed Bianca.

"Exactly!" Martin's head nodded affirmation. "A bomb powerful enough to wreck an entire establishment. Later, another establishment. Better than aimless blows at single men; a stroke at an entire institution!"

"Two!" exclaimed Bianca. "Two, for certainty. Two bombs; I will go with you and throw the other!"

Her glowing eyes were widened on the leader's face and her assumption that Martin would take for his part the actual commission of the act met with no dissent in the company.

At her words, Martin turned his face to her.

"Good, comrade!" he murmured.

He reached out with his hand, putting his fingers for a second over hers. There was almost a tenderness in his gesture.

Mélie breathed sharply.

But Investigator Payne betrayed no excitement, although it was for this moment that he had laboured in months of patience. The Hawes Street group, after interminable weeks of discussion, were now about to undertake a definite outrage and one in which the leaders of the group at least could be apprehended in the act itself, through agents operating on the Investigator's information. That he sat there in their fantastic company unsuspected was an instance of great personal triumph and one which argued much good for the Investigator's future. Yet by his achievement he seemed unstirred; he was looking now again at Mélie and only from the sight of her did his drooping eyes display a dull glow.

III

Because Payne was not an introspective man, he had no surprise at the unique position in which he was placed; he did not recognize its novelty. Yet there was the germ of serious incongruities in the Investigator's future activities. The dull glow of his unmoving eyes that regarded Mêlie with the steadfastness of a sodden devout turning his gaze on the city of the Prophet was a phenomenon out of consonance with his manifest purpose among the Hawes Street reds. That purpose, that intention of exposure and capture, he had accepted from the direction of Special Agent Melchiorri with his customary lack of imagination. His mind made no inquiries into the necessities and social relations of his work. He visioned none of the flaring dramas, intellectual and physical, that had moulded these people into their grim beliefs. And yet, there must have been imagination in the man—a passional imagination. What was it, in his obscure mental processes, so profoundly moved him before Mélie?

He took his eyes from her at last through the sheer necessity of attending the details that were being low-voiced in the room. Karzenowski, the absent one, would prepare the instruments; he had that ability. Each, separately, must secure some one of the chemical requisites. They must see Karzenowski and obtain his list.

Martin had risen and reached, from the top of a heap of pamphlets his dark soft hat. He looked at Bianca.

"Yes," she said, "in a moment."

She covered all but the edges of her flaming hair with a toque, her posture erect, in the virile pose of a feminine pagan diety. Her habit was cut modishly, yet the intensity of her inner presence dominated her clothes and made them appear vague drapings, somehow unreal.

Martin waited for her near the door; she stepped toward him, and with a slight movement to the side, too instinctive to fall into the category of politeness, he permitted her to walk out first into the corridor.

"Good night, Comrades," he spoke.

He closed the door and the footsteps of the two failed in diminuendo.

Mélie had not arisen. She sat in her chair with striking immobility, like an ivory idol of a tragic faith, crowned with sable. Polinsky had relapsed once more into coma. Standing, looking down upon the heavy exuberance of her hair, Investigator Payne regarded Mélie. And she was lost in a dream, knowing nothing of his presence.

Several seconds passed without motion in the room, the three who were left in it disposed like figures in some

inscrutable tableau. It was the Investigator who broke the static pose.

Rather suddenly, more quickly than his ordinary habit, he walked around the table and seated himself in the chair which Martin had occupied, facing Mélie. She did not look up at him.

The Investigator inclined his body forward, projecting his heavy face gradually further into the lamp-light, like a slow materialization from the gloom. One of Mélie's hands lay in an almost passionate inertness on the table; with an unexpected motion the man in front of her moved his own across the separating space and covered it.

She raised her head, not quickly, and her eyes fell upon his lamp-lit physiognomy, close to her now. But there came no change in her expression, it was almost as if he were, in his incredible remoteness from her thoughts, a stolid translucency, through which she now gazed at her visions unhindered. She said nothing to him and for several seconds his thick fingers clasped her hand.

It must have been that some heady stimulant passed from that contact to the sluggish humours of the Investigator's blood. He arose with startling precipitancy and with his arms he made a gesture as if he would bury his fingers in the black profusion of Mélie's hair. But some inner hesitancy made his clutching hands fall short; they dropped to the table over which he now leaned, his breathing audible.

Mélie stood up, meeting his eyes with a glance that held a sense of surprise and an immediate quality of dismissal. She pushed her chair from her and without speech crossed the room and secured her outdoor garments. The Investigator turned as on a pivot, never losing her from his gaze. He made no further motion toward her.

She stuck the pins into her hat slowly, seemingly no longer cognizant of his presence. With the same detachment she moved to the door, opened it, and disappeared in the dark. The man stared a moment at the blank panels; a ghost of a tremor stirred his shoulders, like heavy branches shaken a second by an unseen wind.

Payne looked now as ordinary. He took up his hat. He gave a glance to Polinsky, who kept the place, and then left him to his stupor and his dirty room.

There was nothing out of the ordinary in Payne's gait as he walked once more along Hawes Street, to other streets and to the rooms he occupied in a boarding house. He there stolidly undressed and got into bed. As he closed his eyes on the white pillow, he looked vastly inert.

There was presently a sound. Payne was a man who snored when he slept.

. . .

IV

Karzenowski, the evil Pole, not unlike a host of other Poles in appearance—his hair was straight and the colour of straw, his face was fair and his cheek-bones high—made two bombs. His facility with chemical processes was evidenced in the ingenuity of his machines. He made use of the explosive properties of chloride of nitrogen, generating the material within the bomb from a tube of chlorine gas slowly emitted into ammonia. It was a clever contrivance of the infernal.

Karzenowski brought his bombs to Hawes Street the evening before that night set for the commission of the deed. Investigator Payne came too that night, but rather late, for his preceding conference with Special Agent Melchiorri had been long and important. He was almost too late, indeed, to see the Pole, who, with Shaw, was taking his leave just as Payne came within the illumination of the lamp-light.

Mélie was there, Bianca also, Martin and Polinsky. The latter was unchanged, but the others were subdued, even Bianca. And Martin's gestures, while they had lost none of their inner virility, were less spontaneous. The shadow of that nervous tension that precedes action was over them all.

Martin was speaking to Bianca.

"The pressmen are out of the building before two," he said. "Shall we say two-thirty?"

"For your decision, Comrade," murmured Bianca.

Martin paused, and suddenly, then, addressed Mélie.

She had been in more than her wonted abstraction, a faint frown cut the nacre of her forehead with thin, sharp lines of shadow.

"Mélie!"

As he spoke her eyes widened and fastened themselves upon him with an intensity that was significant of more than simple seeing.

"What?" she asked, in the harsh voice that was common to her.

"You understand your part? And Comrade Payne, yours?"

"We're to watch," muttered Payne, like one who repeats a catechism.

Mélie said nothing. At the Investigator's cognition Martin had nodded briefly, turning again to Mélie. Her lips were closed.

"You understand, Comrade?" he repeated, meeting her eyes, so that these now stared one at the other like two hypnotists in a duel of power.

"I don't understand. . . . " Mélie spoke slowly, her voice a greater harshness.

Martin projected his face impetuously across the table, drawing down his heavy brows until his eyes resembled the slit-like slants of the Orient.

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I did not elect to watch!" she said.

Bianca, intuitional, understood her meaning.

"It's too late now, Mélie!" she cried, and for emphasis sprang up from her chair.

Martin drew back suddenly as Mélie flung her own chair from her; it toppled to the floor with an explosive contact, like a small pistol shot.

Investigator Payne was betrayed into no sudden motion, but he leaned forward slowly, watching Mélie.

Mélie was facing Bianca, her face whiter, her hair a tragic blackness.

"Who gave you the right?"

"I, myself," exclaimed Bianca swiftly. "I will throw the bomb with Martin."

Martin understood now.

"Ah!" he breathed.

He arose also, his face to Mélie. He put his hand out and touched her arm.

"You are worthy of the Cause," he said to her. "But it has been decided that Bianca shall throw the other. We are all willing, Mélie; we must not quarrel now because each of us has the courage for the act. This is the first. . . . There will be others . . ."

As if spelled by his touch, something of the tenseness of Mélie's pose relaxed and her face moved slowly from Bianca to Martin. Bianca sat down again.

"You understand?" asked Martin, softly.

A pause and Mélie spoke.

"I'll watch . . ." she said, voicing her words in a whisper.

His touch remained on her a second more, when he, too, removing his hand, sought a chair. Mélie reseated herself silently and Investigator Payne settled back once more in nerveless stolidity. Yet in the room of the comrades there was a subtle tension as if the product of a subtle unseen vapour in the air breathed by all. No one spoke; Martin got up at last and put on his soft hat.

"It will be better for us not to meet here at all tomorrow night," he said. "Everything is understood now?"

He remained a moment irresolute, and taking then the continued silence for assent, passed out of the door. Investigator Payne followed him, for he was to have a final conference with the Special Agent, who for better safety waited for him now in the investigator's bedroom.

V

It cannot be said that Payne exhibited any unusual phenomena of excitement or suspense during the day that followed, unless one might interpret into these conditions his rather exten-

sive and really aimless wanderings through the streets of the city. Yet he walked with his ordinary heavy precision, with no acceleration of his pace. Evening drew on, and he ate a substantial supper at a basement restaurant.

After his meal he stepped into a bar and drank two or three glasses of porter. He spoke to no one and departed within half an hour. Thereafter he spent another hour in a moving picture theatre, but seemed to be uninterested in the exhibition on the screen. Leaving this place, he went directly to his rooms, where he laid himself heavily on his bed, dressed, and stared up in the dark at the ceiling. His eyes did not close, but he was motionless, like a sleeping man.

Several hours after midnight Payne stood up and walked slowly to the window. He pulled aside the curtain and looked out. The street was quiet; it was a misty night, with a damp fog blurring the street lights.

The Investigator withdrew from the window, donned a large overcoat, and made his way out to the street. He walked off slowly through the fog that had the effect of muffling his footsteps, so that they sounded in the quiet night like padded blows on the loosely stretched membrane of a drum. Accompanied by this even beat, he walked through the night until several miles of streets were between him and his home.

Payne paused at last on a corner and looked down the length of the blurred street, that stretched before him between tall buildings like a veiled cañon. His eyes searched out a building, centrally situated, the recognition made easier by a small electric sign that exhibited the name of one of the more important daily newspapers. He stared at this a moment, crossed the street and continued half a block further, where a narrow alley gave ingress on a row of rear entrances.

For the first time the Investigator became furtive. He approached the alley with singular manœuvres, like the stalking operations of some ponderous cat, and stooping down pushed out his head just the distance to give his eyes the sweep of its length. The narrow passage was empty.

But Payne did not go away. Waiting a few moments, he looked again. Seeing nothing, he once more stood upright. And now for the third time he surveyed the dim alley.

On this occasion he held his crouching posture. Two or three minutes, perhaps, passed over. At the conclusion of this time he observed two figures, nearly shapeless in the distance, come in at the other end. From the Investigator's place of observation they appeared very small, like objects seen through inverted field-glasses. He could hear faintly, almost like the unsubstantial tread of ghosts, the fall of their footsteps. They grew in size, and half the way of the passage they stopped. The larger figure seemed to bend his head and look up. It was then that the concealed men provided by Special Agent Melchiorri emerged, their figures incorporating themselves in the mists with the first two, like masses of dark quicksilver running together. . . .

Investigator Payne stood up. An audible expulsion of breath escaped him. He turned with amazing virility and walked, rapidly now, toward the street from which he had just come.

Once more he crossed and proceeded, still with his curious hurry, down on the side opposite the newspaper building. His head was turned to the entrances of the stores that lined the street and at each he paused perceptibly, searching the dark lobbies for the other watcher.

Almost across from the important building he made out a shadow, drawn up like a splotch of black dye against the door of a store. He swerved in, the figure shrunk a little and recognizing him, became static.

"Come!"

Investigator Payne's voice was hoarse; not its usual quality.

Mélie, her features indistinguishable in the dark, did not move.

The man groped for her hand and finding it, clenched her fingers.

"What?" she whispered tensely.

"The police were there—they've been taken," he muttered.

From Mélie came no sound, she did not question, she accepted the catastrophe without understanding and dumbly. But she suffered herself to be led out to the street. The Investigator pushed his heavy arm under hers, and as if lending her support, hurried her down the street. They turned at the corner, but did not pause in their pace.

For three or four blocks they hastened in this way, without speech. And then the arm of the woman drew back rigidly and she stopped.

"Where are you taking me?" she asked.

The harshness of her voice was unchanged, but it was low, almost whispering.

The Investigator bent near her, until he could see her face, strange and white in the fog.

"I must talk to you!" he said. "We're near Hawes Street. Shall we go there?"

He waited a moment and she made no answer. Once more he stepped forward and found her unresistant now. They hurried on again, dark shapes in the mist, like ghouls returning from a midnight vigil.

Hawes Street, a dim street at best, was cloaked in an impenetrable haze. The figures made their way up the worn steps of the house, coming into the corridor, not less obscure now than the street.

They climbed the stairs in silence.

Entering Polinsky's room, they found the lamp sputtering and low. The place was in disorder. No one was there.

"Where . . ." began Mélie.

"The police have been here . . . he's taken, too," explained the Investigator.

Mélie sank whitely into a chair. She raised her hands to the scarf with which she had covered her hair and drew it down sidewise until it dropped on the floor. She stared down into the dark space under the table as if in that gloom she read some sinister secret.

Opposite her stood Investigator Payne, looking down. Her face was hidden to him and he saw only the mantle of her hair, gleaming, black, incredibly exuberant. In that little room, dirty, smelling curiously of musty paper, these two remained through minutes of utter silence, immobile, like figures transmuted to stone through the malevolence of some evil god.

The movement of the man came to her with a shocking unexpectancy. His hands fell over her shoulders, they closed upon the columns of her arms, lifting her to her feet. He drew her toward him with a passionate strength and with a faint, unpleasant cry he kissed her.

Her head had fallen back, her eyes were partly closed, her muscles were flexed entirely. She made no resistance now; it was an appalling thing, these kisses that he pressed upon her pallid face that showed no emotion, no response, scarcely the breath of life. It was appalling, too, from *him*, this stolid bulk so galvanized with an incredible passion.

"*I* have you now," he muttered. "*He* —they got *him!*"

Into Mélie's cheeks, at the conclusion of his words, two bright spots of red flared, like sudden reflections of an inner fire, just kindled. For another moment she hung limply in his arms, receiving his lips. Then Mélie thrust out her hands; it was as if into that push she had concentrated the strength of all her passions, her inmost desires, and her loathing.

The unexpected thrust threw Investigator Payne from his balance and he toppled back to the table, grasping the edge of this in a moment soon enough to save his further fall. Mélie was bent forward, in the position of a crouch, and her face was distorted with a sudden and monstrous hate.

"I understand you!" she screamed.

"I understand you now! They've taken Martin—and it was *you!*"

On the table, glittering in the light, lay the bright stiletto paper cutter. With a feline spring, Mélie seized it. She raised it in her hand over the Investigator, thrown to one side and clutching the table.

His movement was unpremeditated and instinctive. He threw up his arm, striking Mélie's wrist with a despairing strength. The steel blade turned inward and the force of the blow drove it against her strained, white throat. . . .

VI

SEVERAL months later, after all the reports were in, Payne, the Investigator, was given his promotion and he received a special word of commendation from Special Agent Melchiorri for his exceptional service in the capture and destruction of the Hawes Street reds.

Payne thanked the Special Agent without effusion, but nothing effusive was expected of him. He then departed with his customary stolidity.

EVERYMAN

By Florence Grayson

EACH day he sent me violets because he said my wide purple eyes were like the violets of the woodland.
He yielded graciously to my capricious whims.
He said that the gleam of my hair in the moonlight maddened him.
He said my tears were like lustrous pearls.
If I touched him suddenly he would pale as he gazed into my eyes.
He hummed airs from "The Tales of Hoffman" in my presence. . . .
And in any other pretty girl's.

SOME women exhilarate like a glass of old wine; some chafe like a badly laundered shirt; some soothe like a good cigar; and some are like an aching tooth in the night.

IT is not making love that gets men into trouble; it is the getting away afterward.

FEW men understand women—and those who do few women understand.

THE DEVIL'S WHISPER

By June Gibson

SATAN said to a discontented devil: "I shall appoint you my secretary if you prove your worth."

"I shall go up to the world," said the discontented devil. "I shall return with a minister."

* * *

The discontented devil sought a woman he had known.

She had hair the color of bronze in the sunshine and emerald eyes and a long, thin mouth and smooth, white, beautiful shoulders.

"I shall take you to a minister," he said. "Smile at him as you smiled at me." . . .

Superciliously the minister glared at her.

"Touch him with your slender fingers as you once touched me," urged the devil. . . .

The minister drew aside with revulsion.

"Save her soul," whispered the devil to the minister. . . .

* * *

The discontented devil is now Satan's secretary.

THE CABBAGE FIELD

By Muna Lee

CREATURES of eld, the twisted willows stand,
Or bend to trail lean fingers in the brook.
An uncouth fungus native to the land
Is the blue-clad farmer with his pruning hook.

Before the willows spreads a bluish mist
That makes more glamorous those warlock trees;
And hazily, in a cloud of amethyst,
Drift butterflies above the cabbages.

TRUE love: one's first infatuation, during its first ten minutes.

THE FIRST SWEETHEART

By W. F. Jenkins

TWO elderly maiden ladies, the granddaughters of the lady of the story, will tell you all about the affair with great pleasure and simplicity of expression. It is included in Rymand's biography of the great poet. Rymand, who seems to have been an inveterate sentimentalist, writes at great length. The story is the story of Byrn's first love. Rymand devotes a great deal of space to the lady's family, her education, and her charms. He tells with profound conviction of the tender regard Byrn always paid her memory, and then he tells of how when Byrn had at last come into his own and his poetry had everywhere been given the most unqualified praise, he saw again the sweetheart of his youth. He entered the drawing-room of a friend, in London, and unexpectedly encountered Camilla. There was not an instant's hesitation. He recognized her at once. He went up to her, striving gallantly to conceal the limp he could never quite conquer, and bent over her hand.

"Camilla," he said softly, and looked up into her face. Then his face worked a little and without another word he hurried, almost ran, from the room. Camilla's grandchildren tell the story in different words, but they, too, are much touched by the devotion of this great-hearted man, who, after thirty years, was so much affected by the sight of his first sweetheart that he had to leave the room.

II

WHEN Byrn was barely seventeen, he was a long-haired, wistful, dreamy, good-for-nothing, lovable youth. His love for beauty was a passion. Nothing that was beautiful could ever seem wrong or hurtful. Even when he was but nine or ten he once suffered agonies from gathering thistles in his bare hands. When he was asked why he did not leave them alone when they pricked his skin, he said simply,

"I did not notice it. They were beautiful."

It was no wonder he loved Camilla Langhorne. She was a dark, elfin bit of nonsense. Poets always love women who feel an inclination to laugh at them. Camilla laughed at Byrn. When he stood rapt, full of joy at some beautiful thing, she would smile at him teasingly and break the spell of that beautiful thing to put him under a spell of her own.

And yet, under all her teasing and plaguing of the lad, there must have been a touch of motherliness. He was a pale and slender boy compared to the others she knew. The unfortunate injury to his foot, which he was never able to have remedied even a little, must have made her pity him somewhat. She must have loved him just a little. He was absurdly happy, at any rate. He poured out his shy poet's heart to her. One may laugh at first love, but it is the only pure love, after all. The love of a friend for a friend is tinged with condescension, the love of man for a woman is tinged with passion, even love for God is sometimes discolored by self-interest. But when a boy loves for the first time it is the purest of possible emotions.

So his love was with Byrn. He had found someone to worship, someone who would not sneer at his helpless

foot, someone who was beautiful—so beautiful that he would catch his breath when he first saw her and always hated to take his eyes from her face. He had found a goddess to whom to sing his songs. He wrote her poetry. It was weak, puerile rhyming, but here and there was a phrase that hinted at the splendid, sonorous lines he would later compose.

For two months his love, as he thought, was returned. Then Camilla tired of his ecstatic worship. It was only natural. She was at the age when a man is attractive for what he can do rather than for what he is. Really, that is true at all ages.

A cousin of Camilla's came to visit her family. He walked splendidly, rode magnificently, and held his liquor like a gentleman. She was unable to resist the combination. Byrn was left to himself. He showed himself when she was about to ride with her cousin, and was snubbed. He took it to heart, but because he truly loved her he exposed himself for more snubs.

Finally, Camilla told him she would let him know when she wanted to see him again. It was very polite, and no exception could be taken to the manner in which it was done—but Byrn left his home the next day. He was foolish. If he had stayed, in all probability she would have come to him again after her cousin had left and listened to his poetry, and laughed at him as before.

Byrn went to London. For a long time he remained secluded, then an energetic uncle dragged him out of his moping and sent him on a tour through Italy. He was barely back when another trip, to Hungary, was proposed. He came back smiling. There had been a girl in Buda Pest. . . . The world was not entirely gloomy. He began to mingle in society. A volume of his verses appeared at about this time, and was well received.

He wrote a letter to one of his friends in which he made a statement regarding the source of his poetic mood.

". . . Of course," he said in part, "it is far too early to say that I shall ever write any poetry worth reading twice. I hope so, but one can never tell. There is one thing the writing of those little verses has taught me, however. I have always been an almost pagan worshipper of beauty, and have wanted to create beauty for myself. Unless you, too, have felt the passionate longing to create something that is beautiful, you can never understand the craving to make something, to cause something to be that is you, of you alone — something that is beautiful. For a long time I felt very guilty. I envied God! I envied Him the power to make things that were beautiful past imagining. Think of it! I, a seventeen-year-old dreamer, envied God the power to create even a little flower! I could see that my verses—as I wrote them—were pitifully inadequate reflections of the beauty I saw all around me. I envied God—

"Then something came which caused me suffering. I will not go into details. I hardly know them myself. There was a girl—at any rate, I suffered. After a while I tried, listlessly, a little verse. It was better than any I had done before. I tried again. I found I had suddenly bettered myself. Sometimes I struck a phrase that meant to me the things I felt. Some day I shall write—it may be—phrases that shall mean to others what I feel. Now, it is happiness to write down only for myself. Reading over my little poems, I saw a certain prettiness, not beauty, but a hint of beauty yet to come.

"And then I saw one of the beautiful sunsets that always have the power to bring tears of joy into my eyes. At my uncle's house in Hertshire, I saw a sunset of strange and beautiful colors. My eyes filled with tears at the beauty of it. Then I realized what had made my poems. My suffering had brought me the ability to hint at beauty. I looked at the sunset. I thought of my little verses. I thought of the faint prettiness I could see here and there. I compared it with the overwhelming glory of the sky before me. And the idea came to me, 'If the suffering you

have felt has brought you the power to make this tiny verse, before God made that sunset, how He must have *suffered!*"

Byrn underscored the last word heavily, in an effort to convey the terrible agony he conceived must have been the prelude to the creation of beauty like that of the sunset he had seen.

III

Byrn continued to live and grow: his verse became poetry, and his poetry became great. A poet is always great in what he is rather than in what he thinks, because the man rather than mere thoughts makes the greatness of his lines. Byrn took his place among the first rank of living poets, and then among the first poets of all time. He had lived, and loved, and suffered. Those three things make a man.

Camilla, in the meantime, grew to conventional young-ladyhood, to conventional romance, and was married in the conventional manner, without any more than the conventional flutterings of the heart. She was thoroughly satisfied with herself, with her husband and with her estate in life. She administered her husband's house in the conventional manner, with conventional energy and inefficiency. She had three children, took on a little weight and grew "matronly."

Above all, being in undisputed control of the numberless petty things about the house, and having no decision of hers in these minor things questioned, she gradually assumed an expression and air of the most thorough rectitude and authority. Her face assumed a look of pious and unshakable self-satisfaction. Her fat, stupid little children grew up and married other fat, stupid people. Camilla's self-satisfaction grew.

In time her husband died. Camilla was grief-stricken in the conventional way, wore heavy mourning in the most conventional abandon, and never put on colors again. It was the conventional thing in those days for widows to wear black forever after the death of their husbands, and Camilla was conventional. She ceased to be matronly, and grew stout. The increase of weight continued. Soon she would have been called fat. She wore black silk all the time, with jet earrings and an abundance of ruffles.

Anyone who has been as conventional as she had been, and as unoriginal as she had been, is always welcomed in the best conservative society. Camilla always paid ceremonial visits to the best people upon the occasions of her visits to London. She was calling upon the Honourable Mrs. Walpole when Byrn was announced. He had been brought to the house by another friend of his.

When he came into the room, walking gracefully in spite of the slight limp he could never quite avoid, they presented him to Camilla at once. She had told them all of his former infatuation for her, and they expected the presentation to have some marked effect upon the poet. For an instant he did not place her. He bowed over her hand graciously and then looked up into her face.

He saw a plump, expressionless face, with several chins. A sentimental smile was upon it. The monstrosity of a silk dress, the ugly and peculiar jewelry of a previous generation, the ruffles, and above all the stoutness of the figure sitting in the chair appalled him.

Byrn was a debonair figure, in spite of his slight lameness. A gentle, half-cynical smile lingered always about his mouth and his eyes were expressive and luminous. Standing before the seated, stout, black-silk-upholstered figure of Camilla, he made a startling contrast. She was smiling at him in a sentimental fashion he could not understand. Suddenly he saw her eyes. They alone were unchanged. Camilla, the old Camilla, looked out of them at him. Byrn started.

"Camilla," he exclaimed softly.

Then, beneath the coarsened skin and the dulling coat of fat, he saw the outlines of Camilla's face as he had

known it. For years after she discarded him he had treasured the image of the dark, elfin beauty that had laughed at him. Now Camilla had long faded mistily into the dimness of the past, and Camilla's memory had been a faint picture of quaint prettiness and singular charm. Byrn stared at the stout, self-satisfied woman before him. Every gesture she made bespoke conscious rectitude and the petty, absolute power she had wielded over her husband's household. Every line of her face showed the pious satisfaction with which she contemplated herself and all her works. Byrn, remembering her as he had known and loved her, and seeing the grossness she had allowed herself to become, found himself struggling with a strange emotion. His face worked a little. He hurried—almost ran—from the room.

Behind him, the sentimental observers of the little reunion gazed at each other beatifically. It was a beautiful thought, that after thirty years Byrn should be so affected by the sight of his first sweetheart. They rolled the saccharine morsel of sentimentality over their mental tongues, and treasured the scene to repeat to their children, while Byrn, out in the hallway, was making herculean struggles to suppress his mirth.

PROOF

By Helen Barnes

HE told me that the fragrance of my hair was more dulcet than pansies. He gave me a string of pearls that fell to my corsage.

He kissed the hem of my gown and cherished a rose that I had touched to my lips.

He flayed a man who smiled at me as I passed.

He wrote me a note each day.

He brought me lotus leaves from China because I had expressed a desire for them.

He rescued me from a runaway horse.

He serenaded me beneath my window.

He bathed my dogs. . . .

But I was not convinced that I loved him until I saw him kiss a beautiful woman.

PEOPLE say hasty marriages should be discouraged, because they lead to divorce. Some day it will be realized that hasty divorces should be discouraged, because they lead to remarriage.

THE only true misogynist is the man whose fiancée has sold his letters to his wife.

THE NEXT TIME

By Hugh Kahler

I

TWICE, during the long, cold drive to the cemetery, Tresson's blunt-fingered hand sought the waistcoat pocket where five fat cigars stood to attention, their truncated noses projecting a half-inch above the black broadcloth. Twice, under the pale eyes of the clergyman at his elbow, the hand came away empty, and a vague shame stultified Tresson's face.

The presence of all five cigars proved that he not not smoked that day, for his self-imposed allowance restricted him relentlessly to the number, placed in the pocket when he dressed and never supplemented by evasions such as friendly gifts. When the fifth was smoked, the pocket went empty till morning.

Asa B. Tresson was a law unto himself, and prosecutor, jury, judge and jailer, beside. The gesture proved something else; with an ordinary man it would have meant merely the recognition by the senses of a stress demanding narcotization; with Tresson it meant that he confronted an issue, a problem, calling for the extra touch of shrewdness which he had discovered to be obtainable from nicotine. He never smoked unless he needed the last gentle stroke of the blade of his wits along the strop afforded by tobacco. He refrained from calling up the reserves, now, not through deference to the clergyman, to whose comfort and opinion he was alike unconscious, but rather because the presence of the other man distracted his attention from the task in hand—because the pale, mild, professionally condolent gaze seemed somehow to reproach him for employing leisure enforced by the funeral of one wife to the problem of selecting another.

Tresson was not a man of sensitive perceptions; had he been alone he would have welcomed the justifiable idleness as ideally provided for exactly these reflections; he had something like reverence for Time, and this reverence was deepened to a kind of fear by the occasion. The woman who made the journey in the hideously ornate Thing ahead had exhausted her account with the bank of hours and years; he was reasonably sure that his own balance was still generous, but he was impressed, by the poor expedients which seek to make death absurd under a Punch-and-Judy show effect of pomp, by the knowledge that this balance, however large, was dwindling with every turn of the wheels in the rutted snow. He had an oppressing consciousness of a need for desperate haste, which made him impatient of the delay in coming to handgrips with the greatest issue of his life.

But he knew that he could not concentrate effectively on his problem under the distraction of Doctor Blaine's mild platitudes of sympathy. He would use this time to consider that asbestos matter of Haggerty's, and "take up" the bigger question when he could take off his coat, loosen his collar and shoes, lift his feet to the fender and—light a cigar. He had his mental processes under such excellent discipline that by the time they circled between the massed evergreens and gray-granite pedestals of Rosemount Lawns—he rather liked the name, inscribed in gilt

capitals on the iron arch at the entrance—he had penetrated Haggerty's strategy and formed his plans of counter-plot. He felt better, vaguely; he had not wholly wasted the hour. His conscience was free, now, to let him play his part in the last tableau of the afternoon, his mind momentarily released from labor.

He listened to the service abstractedly, his face so grim that Miss Hattie Rearick, facing him across the rectangular gash in the frozen earth—tastefully lined with green cambric—repressed a sigh at the stony frigorification of grief.

Miss Hattie approved of grief, in the abstract, under these conditions, but an excess of it, in this particular instance, was discouraging. But, then, Miss Rearick had felt something of the same emotion at every one of the twelve funerals to which she had gone since her latest birthday—every one of them, curiously, the last tribute to some beloved wife. Miss Hattie would have felt slightly immodest about attending a man's funeral; it would have been indecent not to display grief, on such an occasion, and yet to wear the woebegone expression suitable to the affair might easily give rise to whispers. Miss Hattie had heard such whispers; she had even repeated them. It is hard to grow middle-aged gracefully—alone.

The grimness which had impelled Miss Rearick's sigh arose from the green cambric. It held Tresson's eye during the drumbeat of slow, solemn words, which made no impact on his intelligence. Just as the agile master of ceremonies stooped to unfasten the fabric, one black-gloved hand holding the tapes cannily recovered from the four bearers, Tresson leaned quickly and tore a slender strip from the edge. The undertaker's back was turned; to those who saw the movement it seemed as if Tresson had merely loosened the fastenings at his corner. Only Miss Hattie's suffused eyes saw him crumple the bit of cloth and bestow it in a pocket. A quite genuine tear fled down Miss Hattie's cheek—a tear which welled out of a sentimental soul much given to moving-picture tragedy. Also, to be sure, there was a hint of regret that Asa B. Tresson, under his outwardly wooden habit, should shelter a capacity for such touching devotion. Miss Hattie thought of that bit of cambric, enshrined in soft leather and carried next Mr. Tresson's heart. It appealed to her sentiment almost as strongly as it depressed her much-trodden optimism.

The earth rumbled on hollow wood; the little group of mourners dissolved, furtive lifting of heads and squaring of shoulders replacing the reverent posture of the sobering moment. Carriage wheels crunched in the snow. Doctor Blaine shook hands gravely.

"You must remember that beyond all this—" he gestured oratorically at the gray snow and grayer sky, the bare branches and the black garb of the thinning group—"beyond all this there is a happiness such as you have never known—"

Tresson's eye lighted with a sudden stabbing gleam. His fingers tightened on the clergyman's.

"Sure," he agreed, absently using his own vernacular. "I know—happiness . . . " his voice died in his swift flood of realization. . . . "Happiness . . . " He caught himself abruptly. "Doctor, would you mind riding back with her sister—she feels—"

"Of course—of course." Doctor Blaine responded eagerly to the hint. The dear man liked Tresson better than ever for the unselfishness which deprived himself of consolation for the benefit of that acid sister-in-law, who had always hated him. He reflected, with a glow of reassurance, that Tresson's undemonstrative habit was but the cloak of a rich and wholly orthodox belief. He ventured to take some timid steps toward effecting a reconciliation with Miss Leggett, during the long drive back, speaking vaguely of fine natures concealed below unalluring

husks—the pathos of estranged lives—the Christian duty of love—Miss Leggett laughed rather grimly. The good doctor grieved over her hardness, but, aware of the pressing need of new carpets in the parish house, forebore to press the topic.

Alone in his carriage, bitterly cold and dimly redolent of stables, Asa B. Tresson lifted his feet to the empty seat in front of him, sank his chin deep in the fur of his upturned collar and rolled an unlighted cigar between appreciative lips. He would not smoke, yet. It would need all five cigars, tonight—back in the empty house, heavy with the smell of the sickly, unnatural flowers already blackening against the gray snow. He could wait. But his mind attacked the issue, nevertheless.

It had happened to him, after all his doubts; the persistent dream of years, long ago conceded to be a vain imagining, to be thrust relentlessly out of mind as a futile star-aspiration, had come true. He remembered vividly when he had first found it, unbidden, in the front of his brain—this vision of freedom through death. They had just come back from the ordeal of a wedding-trip, a tour of confused and uncomfortable lands, reached and left behind by a sickeningly unsteady steamer; his own idea had been a visit to Niagara Falls, where his mother and father had spent a week, to which, over his curious and uncomprending head, they had sometimes made soft, wistful allusion. He remembered how his mother's eyes had seemed to melt when she spoke of it. In some fashion it came to be inseparably associated with his breathless anticipations of marriage—marriage with Edith Waynflete. How she had smiled at his suggestion! They had gone abroad, in a great, gilt-and-plaster mausoleum of a cabin appropriately branded as the Bridal Suite. And they had come back—and Tresson had found the new dream to keep in the place of the one which, between their going and returning had strangely vanished.

The first dream had been vague enough; merely a walk along an aisle with Edith on his arm—carriages—rice—solitude—and living happily ever after. He had made it come true. Money—money—and more money; slowly acquired respect from men who had once looked over his head or through him; power over these men—power to make them elect him into their clubs and ask him to their houses. That they hated him made no difference; he had seen Edith Waynflete; thereafter his eyes saw all else as merely the foreground of a portrait. Luckily, the Waynfletes were poor. And when a man is terribly in love with you, a man whose only outward sign of impossibility is a certain half-pathetic anxiety about the trifles mentioned in naive works on etiquette, a man who dresses too well, a man who speaks too carefully, a man who is bashed and timid in your sight and yet whom other men mention in that unwilling tone of respectful scorn which means power—when all this happens to you, and you aren't having a very good time, anyway, and nobody else wants you enough to take you without the *lagniappe* of dower, well, perhaps you'll disagree with Edith Waynflete. It would have to be proved, though.

The dream came true, all but the living happily ever after, which didn't.

Tresson didn't blame Edith. He had never blamed her. Indeed, her point of view was exactly his. She had stooped to him; it had been precisely that superiority which had heightened her charm in his eyes. He had wanted her first because she was so far out of his reach, because she typified all the significance of achievement and success. He had no taste for easy accomplishments.

From the very beginning it had been the impossible which tempted him—his whole business career was built upon a positive passion for the difficult. And so with love. He had fallen in love with what Edith Waynflete stood for. That she represented it fittingly,

in her cool, graceful body, her slim hands, her steady, level eyes, her perfectly schooled voice, was merely by the way. He would not have married her if she had been the daughter of one of the builders to whom he sold lumber and lime and brick. As Edith Waynflete she fascinated him. As Lena Bierbaum he would have scarcely noticed her.

Condescension was inevitable. He had himself invited, fostered it, from the moment when he first bowed too low over a hand he touched too timidly, and, in too-precise speech, desired the favor of dancing in too-correct fashion, with this half-scornful, half-amused girl, who seemed to see clear through and through him. He had prefaced his declaration of love with a concise and accurate rehearsal of his unworthiness; he had taken her reluctant assent as the extreme of sacrifice on her part, had manifested, through the brief betrothal, the attitude of a serf lifted to sit at the queen's right hand. The briefness of that engagement had not puzzled him; he knew accurately that Waynflete, as he phrased it to himself, "was gasping for breath like a landed fish and couldn't pull the father-in-law stuff till he qualified." And yet her willingness to marry him so soon had seemed then —still seemed, as he rode back from her new grave—a miracle of surrender. No, he was just to Edith; she had tried to play the game.

She had tried. That was it. Tried. It had needed effort. He had seen that effort from the instant of his first, timid kiss in the carriage which took them from the church. She had suffered it—even returned it, for she played her game generously, like the patrician she was—but he had known. He had always known, from that moment till the day when he had stood in the doorway of the hospital-room, looking at her face, gray against the pillows, the lips asking him to stay, the eyes begging him to go and let her die among her own—and he had gone.

Oh, she had paid. Not once, in all those dreadful years, had she lifted the veil and let him see, of her own design, that in her sight he was her inferior. Not once had she deliberately patronized him. She had even held her peace over his persistent social self-consciousness, permitting him to learn gradually, without her spoken tuition. There had been no effort to humiliate, to "put him in his place"; still less had there been any open attempt to lift him to hers. She had been his wife; there had been moments when he had half believed that the barrier between them was of his own imagining. But they had been brief. He knew better.

Twelve years of it!

Twelve years of facing the thing he hated more than any other thing within his consciousness; a mistake, an error of plan, a blunder which intelligence would have avoided.

Twelve years of fighting away that persistent vision of another chance—a chance won through the only thinkable means—Edith's death before it was too late to start afresh.

Twelve years of breakfasts and dinners, of evenings at home and abroad, of inevitable contacts; twelve years of dreaming of a life in which there should be no gracious giving, with its postulate of humble entreaty, of life in which he was king by right instead of by marriage—twelve years of hell, for a man whose pride was his power . . .

It would have been easier if they had quarrelled. Angry words have a trick of razing barriers of caste; he felt, without reasoning this out, that Edith would have evened things between them if like the wives of some of his friends, she had stooped to plain speaking. But, when he irritated her, as he did, sometimes, with a half-formed intent of forcing a quarrel, she grew icier, colder, more relentlessly courteous; the difference between them was never more maddeningly evident to Tresson than when he stormed himself out of dignity and grievance together, beating away his anger and his cause against the silken passivity of her silence.

He soon learned to hold his tongue; to go his ways in silence; he took a certain sullen comfort, after life had settled and hardened like cooling lava into unchangeable forms, in going back to some of the vulgarities he had outgrown—the trick of sitting coatless, his shoes unlaced, his collar loosened; the unlovely habit of holding a cigar grimly between clenched teeth; small offenses against the decorum of the table. And as she ignored these provocations, without even the recognition implied in disdain, he hated her because she made him hate himself, made him feel the common mud of him, brick beside marble.

If she died first—if she died first—if she died before he had slipped too far into the years—if she died in time to give him another chance at life . . . if he had been less rigorous in his control of his thought the refrain would have become an obsession. He might have killed her, craftily, as such men kill, if he had let it possess him. He elbowed it away, persistently, catching his breath at the gleam of hope it offered and forcing himself, with the next heart-beat, to admit that there was no hope. He would not let his mind go beyond the "if"—he did not cross the gulf and build him Spanish castles on its farther bank. That was not his way; each step in order.

He wasted no brain-stuff on elaborations of the unattainable. Edith was eight years younger than he; she had the perfect health which belongs to frail-looking people; her grandmother was still living; the insurance agents who sold him complicated policies on his own life would have classified her as a "preferred risk" and alloted her an "expectancy" far beyond his own. He knew that she would outlive him; he had taken a kind of pleasure in leaving her everything he owned, without condition or proviso. It would show her, he reflected sourly, that he had the instincts of a gentleman in some things, at least—the big things. He knew that if it told her this it would lie to her, for his instinct was to strike back at her from his grave—cut her down to her dower-rights, circumscribe her with clauses forbidding her to remarry. . . . He had to fight hard to make that will. He knew that what gentility he might display was not of instinct.

If she died first. . . . always he choked the thought just there. That was enough; unless he killed her she would live long after he had left her to forget the ignominy of their marriage. He would not let his mind go beyond the fantastic premise. And, when she died, in that abrupt, unheralded way, seeming to step straight from vivid health to the blenched exhaustion from which she slept her way into the silence, he was stunned, crushed by the weight of his good fortune, cannily wary of some hidden hook within the gift flung in his way by over-friendly Fate. He had learned to distrust the appearance of good luck. A childhood fable woke in a forgotten corner of his brain—the peasant who is given a single wish and wastes it with his next breath to gain a sausage. He had a wish, now—one only. There would be no second grace like this. He set his teeth in the cigar.

"I've got to be blamed careful, this time," he said aloud.

He nodded as if to promise it. A world of women—a world in which, now, he could choose almost as he pleased — and only one chance to choose! He was forty-seven; he had ten years left in which to gain the one thing he had not throttled out of life. "There is a happiness beyond all this" —the clergyman's assurance brought a grim, twisted grin behind it. Happiness . . . perhaps, if he were very cunning, very slow, very cold . . . well, he would be. No blindfolded grab-bag affair, this time. He'd choose the woman the way he chose an investment; one lesson was all he needed.

He let himself into the house. They had aired it; the chill of the raw day still defied the hidden steam-pipes; the smell of the flowers hung moistly on

the cold breath of it. He shook his head, as a dog tries to shake off a burr, and quickened his step on the stair.

In his own room he breathed a little more comfortably; she had never come here; there was nothing here to remind him of her; he had bought the furniture himself, supervised its arrangement. The room was as utilitarian as an office.

He flung off his overcoat, hung the black cutaway carefully over the back of a chair, unbuttoned his collar, loosened the laces of his shoes. He let his bulk sink into an ugly arm-chair, sighing—he never could contrive to sit down without that exhalation of relief. Very slowly he lifted the lighted match to the cigar.

"Ah-h-h!"

A clock struck somewhere. He looked at his watch, the momentary relaxation of his face stiffening into concentrated intentness. Deliberately, cleared by the withheld solace of tobacco, his mind answered the summons of his will. There should be no mistake, this time . . .

II

He sat alone in his pew, the next Sunday, erect, attentive, motionless, under Doctor Blaine's recondite diminutions of the camel and enlargements of the needle's eye. Doctor Blaine knew his business; the rectorate of St. Midas' exists for the tempering of the wind to the fatted calf. His voice did not disturb the current of Tresson's thought. Four days; four days utterly lost out of life; four days since he had come back to his empty house to face the incredible, to realize that he had his second chance, to plan his use of that one wish that would be granted him . . . and he could not. He did not know what to do with the freedom death had given back to him. And he was beginning to be afraid of freedom. It is a terrible thing to be afraid of a blessing.

A world of women—women to whom he had but to whisper . . . no, not that—he had bought one woman, and learned the fallacy of the delusion which holds that money buys nothing. It buys too horribly much . . . no, he knew so much, at least. The next time the woman must care for him, not for his money; she must—he choked mentally at the word—she must love him, unselfishly, without calculations. Well, then? He was rather an impressive figure of a man, now that he had outgrown the awkwardness and crudities of his youth; he wasn't tall, to be sure, but there were plenty of shorter men under his eye in church; he had begun to accumulate weight, but the tailors said . . . and, properly brushed, his hair did well enough. Women *looked* at him; he had intercepted appraising, speculative glances enough to know that he interested eyes which did not see his seven millions when they looked at him. It had been even more noticeable during these four days; the severity of his black clothes, the deep band about his hat, seemed somehow to become him, to lend him an added dignity.

No—there were plenty of women who would care nothing for his money and a great deal for him. It was a question of choosing among them.

Choosing—that was the terrible thing—choosing one out of so many, choosing right against so many chances of choosing wrong. He was clear-minded enough to be distrustful of his judgment; Edith's beauty had obscured it, he saw, as he analyzed that initial blunder. He had let the wish to be loved by her sire a belief that he would be—or was. There must be no more of that. He must not waste this wish on a sausage!

He thought of Major Whistlethorpe, whose sixty years had made him easy prey for a girl with red hair and green eyes, who wore a great deal of jewelry and preferred the past participles of such verbs as see and do; he thought of Jeremy Yonge, scandalizing Lake City from roof to cellar by his abrupt elopement with that pug-nosed manicure at the Seneca Hotel; he thought

of one after another of the settled men whom he had watched as they snatched at youth from behind the bars of age.

Not that he was himself in their category; he smiled grimly at the absurd idea of his doing anything unpremeditated, unweighed and pondered in advance. And yet he had felt a distinct wistfulness at the sight of the shirt-waisted girl who ran the newsstand at his office-building; his stenographer, efficient, soft-spoken, chastely garbed, had made an appeal so subtle to his imagination that in shrewd self-defense he had discharged her and procured a stupid youth who smelt abominably of cheap cigarettes . . . no, he would not make an ass of himself. But he knew that in him slept the same capacity for asininity to which these other men had yielded. The difference was that he was on his guard.

He told himself that he did not want beauty, this time; he did not want to risk a second subjugation through the eye; he was keenly aware of the fleshly weakness which can overcome the strongest wit and will. He had been suppliant once, helplessly enslaved by physical perfections, perfections which tortured him with jealousy when other men revealed even a courteous perception of them. He had schooled himself, deliberately, in a contempt for skin-deep qualities. He knew that unguided his instinct would fling him into the hands of the nearest cheaply pretty girl who smiled at him. He knew accurately what he would pay for such repeated folly.

No, he wanted a woman who was superficially unstirring, unspectacular, a woman not greatly sought by other men; she would appreciate him the more truly if he stood for her single romance. He excluded widows; he wanted no comparisons, good or ill, with the standards established by others. A single woman, not too young, not too pretty, not too sought after, so rich that his money would not matter, and yet not so schooled to money that she would fail to understand the measure of his achievement—to Edith and her kind the possession of wealth was incidental, no more a cause of pride than the possession of arms and legs.

The length of possession, the method of acquisition, these mattered, to Lake City's two-generation snobs; money itself did not. Or, at least, it failed to atone for or obscure beginnings. That was it. He wanted no more subtle patronage. He wanted to be admired, reverenced, for the money which was the index of his success; he wanted the poverty of his beginnings to serve only as a background against which his triumph should be magnified, like Lincoln's or Napoleon's. Therefore, the ideal woman must spring, like him, of fairly recent poverty.

Again, he had acquired by contact with it a certain respect for social distinction; consciousness of inferiority had bred in him a seething desire to find a milieu in which he should be conscious of its opposite. He wanted the sensations of affable condescension which he attributed to the aristocrats who had tolerated him as Edith Waynflete's husband. He realized that he had acquired, through money and marriage, a certain social status, not at the crest or near it, but well above the lower levels. He meant to find his wife from a stratum to which he looked down, from which she would look up to his, as he had unwillingly looked up to Edith's.

All of these resolutions had taken form since Tuesday.

Somehow, until Edith had been carried finally out of the midst of life, his mind had been numb under the shock of liberty regained. It was only when the smell of the funeral flowers had dimmed in the big, empty house that he had been able to visualize himself as a free agent and settle to a clear-minded survey of the future, once more plastic, to be moulded as he chose. And gradually he had analyzed himself, his situation and his desires. He had reduced it so far: a woman not too young, a woman with little learn-

ing in romance, with no surface glitter to have built up pride, with plenty of money, not too long possessed; with a position in society below his own. These were essential qualifications. Out of them he could rebuild a wrecked life, spend what was left of his balance in the atmosphere his starved soul craved, find—yes, he thought defiantly—find happiness. . . .

His fingers strayed to the pocket of his coat. He had never acquired the aristocratic trick of keeping his feet and hands still, in the presence of those whom he recognized as superiors. He felt the wadded lump of cloth he had put there, on Tuesday, as he straightened from the gash in the harsh ground. He drew it out, unfolded it, smoothed it, studying it with a stern, grim look which brought out all the essential strength of his face, made him seem what he was, a man born to conquer by sheer force of will.

Slowly he folded it, tucked it carefully into a thin leather pocketbook, the grimness melting into a kind of self-satisfaction. He looked up with the vague consciousness that he was under scrutiny, and his eyes met those of Harriet Rearick, swimming, softly, tenderly alight, gazing at him with a look he had only seen in the faces of setters, worshipping their divinely perfect masters.

For an electric moment the contact of glances held them both; strangely, somewhere at the base of Tresson's scalp, a shivering tingle sprang up, speeding along his spine. His cheeks reddened dully; he could feel a heightened pulse at his throat and lifted a loosening finger to his collar.

Miss Rearick's glance tore itself free. She turned a little in her pew, resting an elbow on its arm so that a gray-gloved hand half-obscured the rather retreating chin and the unbeautiful, perpetually parted lips. He studied her deliberately.

He could not know, of course, that Miss Rearick saw herself quite accurately with his eyes. The triplex mirrors of a dressing-table would have seemed to the late Mr. Robert Burns as a direct answer to his prayer. Miss Rearick knew exactly the effect of that disguising glove. And she knew, too, that her hands were rather pretty. But to Tresson the attitude was artless, unconscious. He availed himself of the opportunity to inspect Len Rearick's girl more minutely than he had ever scrutinized her before.

She was rather nicely dressed, he decided—quiet elegance, without ostentation. She had some color, too, and her hair was attractively simple in its arrangement. Let's see—Len died in—she must be thirty-eight or nine—a good age, when one surveys it from the peaks of forty-seven. Len left her every cent, too—she must have a million or so, at least.

Tresson began to be genuinely interested as his first reflection showed him that she met his qualifications one after another. Socially, well, Len Rearick's girl wouldn't ever look down on Edith Waynflete's husband—not in Lake City, anyway. He tried to remember if she had ever had any attention—girls with a million or so are unlikely to escape it, even if they are thirty-eight or more and superficially unspectacular. But he decided that for some reason men had overlooked this girl's million. He had never seen her under circumstances hinting of masculine interest. She met this test, too, then.

He kept his eyes on her steadily as the service ended. She began to fascinate him insidiously as he imagined her awed gratitude if such a man as he rose sunwise on her horizon. It would be a miracle, to Hattie Rearick, if any man loved her, wanted to marry her. What would it be if Asa B. Tresson should stoop from his magnificence to make her his! He caught his breath at the thought of it; she would just about *pray* to him, he felt.

Doctor Blaine's voice echoed solemnly in benediction. The organ crept softly into the postlude as the congregation moved into the aisles. He timed his exit from the pew so that it brought him face to face with Hattie Rearick.

She lifted a submerged glance to his, timidly reverent. She offered her hand.

"One—one feels the futility of words," she whispered.

She had lifted the speech bodily from one of the romances of the estimable Mrs. Ward, but it rang true enough to Tresson's ear. Edith would have smiled sweetly at it, of course, but Edith . . .

"It is easy to deceive a man with a stuffed badger," runs the Japanese refrain, "but not another badger!"

Even so, Tresson had a sudden vivid memory of Len Rearick, red-shirted and sweating, driving his strike-breakers when the longshoremen tried to cripple his lake freighters. Len had not "felt the futility of words!" exactly. But he drowned the thought in the liquid adoration which bathed him from Hattie Rearick's eyes. He bowed gravely.

"I—I saw you there—Tuesday," he said quietly. "It was good of you to come—I was touched—"

She smiled wanly.

"I felt that I *must* go," she whispered. "Something seemed to call me—poor, dear Edith . . ."

Poor, dear Edith, in some exclusive little corner of heaven, must have heard and smiled. She had spoken to Len Rearick's daughter—several times, always very sweetly. Edith had taken pains to be kind to the lower classes, even after she married into them. But Tresson did not recognize the pose. Hattie Rearick's tone and glance elaborated her phrase. It was as if she had said:

"What a tragedy—to have so much to live for and to die so soon!"

He bowed again, shaking his head as if to say that however stupidly Providence might act, a gentleman must refrain from criticism.

They walked out together, and he accepted a lift in her car. Smiles followed them. Tresson was conscious—conscious and contemptuous. If those snobs thought that their silly rules were going to make him waste what was left of youth, they could guess again. Let them smile and be damned!

In the car she ventured more daringly.

"I saw you—in church," she whispered, "looking at that bit of cloth—I knew what it was—I saw you take it—on Tuesday."

She lifted a hand to her throat.

Tresson stared, a dull, bricky flush in his face.

She went on, softly rapturous:

"I saw your face as you took it—I know you would always keep it. You looked stern, terrible, as if you were taking something back from God, keeping something of her in spite of Him. You looked like that today—in church. I—I couldn't sleep, that night, for thinking of it. Love—" her voice dropped—"love like that—and to go and leave it—oh, poor Edith!"

The flush ebbed. Asa B. Tresson sighed deeply. One hand rested lightly on Miss Rearick's glove. He felt the fingers quiver, saw the tremor shake her shoulders.

"If you guessed how it comforts—to be understood like that!" he breathed. "I'm so terribly alone—no one understands—her people—"

The fingers tightened convulsively about his. Miss Rearick nodded, one hand again at her throat. He seemed to hear distant voices, chanting hymns, to catch a smell of incense. His soul expanded. This was his answer! He had solved his problem—after four days!

"If—if you would let me come to see you, sometimes," he continued. "If I could talk to you—knowing that you understand—it would be easier—"

"Oh, *yes!*" The eyes bathed him with worship. "*Yes.*"

He came that evening. Len Rearick's great house stood far back from the Avenue; it was easy to reach the door unpursued by the eye of the world. The drawing-room was warm and softly cheerful, the shaded lamp throwing down a light which just missed Hattie Rearick's face and revealed her shoulders. They were

rather good shoulders, considering . . . he did not talk of Edith . . . Somehow he found himself reciting in monologue an epic account of the life and battles of Asa B. Tresson, incited and stimulated by Greek-chorus echoes at the end of every paragraph.

He discovered, too, that Hattie Rearick knew a vast deal about his life, about the early days that Lake City had been at pains to forget as thoroughly as possible. He saw that she used those harsh days as a background, as he used them; in her eyes as in his own they threw his present being forward in relief, in heroic proportions. To Edith he had been a rather pitiful parvenu; to Hattie Rearick, even then, he had been a hero. She must have followed his rise, even as it carried him away from her, out of her reach, with eyes that adored and reverenced. Again he had the impression of incense.

They were married just as spring began. They went to Niagara Falls.

III

"YES, dear," said Hattie's voice. Her eyes swam to him across the table.

He snorted over a rather lengthy typewritten invoice. One hand sought a thin leather pocketbook in an inner pocket. He opened it, still eyeing the bill, a hard smile twisting his lips. Under Hattie's transfixed gaze he produced the folded bit of green cambric. She straightened, her lips compressed, her nostrils pinched, as she recognized it. He looked up in time to detect the expression. A glint of hope woke in his glance. He spoke harshly.

"Remember that, Hattie?" He lifted the bit of cloth, with the air of a banderillero tormenting the doomed bull. There was an eagerness in his voice.

"I've kept it all this time—you see—" he broke off, almost wistfully.

Her eyes adored him. "It is like you, dear. I—I knew that you would keep it always—it was what made me—made me know how splendid you are—when I saw you take it. Don't think that it grieves me to know that you remember poor, dear Edith. I shouldn't want you to forget—"

"You mean that you'd think less of me if I didn't want to remember her like that?" He leaned toward her expectantly.

"I—I think more of you for remembering," she amended. "You know that everything you do is—is fine and right and splendid, Asa."

"It is, eh? Well, you listen. If you want to know why I kept that sample—" he crossed to a stand which held a telephone and called a number harshly, his eyes on the statement in his hand, the slip of cambric caught under his blunt thumb.

"I want to talk to Seavey himself. You tell him it's Asa Thornton talking, understand?"

A pause.

He breathed noisily through his teeth.

Then:

"Seavey? Tresson speaking. I've got your bill. I suppose you held it up till you were sure I'd be ashamed to defend a suit on it—I know the tricks of your trade, all right. Well, it doesn't make any difference to me who tries to sting me, nor when, nor how, nor how much. I don't stand for it, see? And you've got me charged with twenty yards of silk grave-lining at two-fifty a yard—what's that? Sure. I know you lined it; I took a sample myself, to make sure. Ellenbogen and Abrams sell that cambric for eight cents a yard. Now you listen. I'm going to chop that bill of yours right in half and send you a check in full. And you're going to be glad to get it, Seavey. What? Oh, all right—we'll go into court, with your bill and my sample—there's plenty more evidence out at Rosemount Lawns, if we need it. What? Oh, I don't mind getting laughed at, Seavey. But can you afford to be? I thought so. I'll send you a cheque for half the amount, then, and you'll endorse it as receipt in full. S'all!"

He swung around, facing his wife

with an eagerness almost tremulous.

"That shows me up, doesn't it? You've been dreaming that I hung on to that sample to remember Edith, eh? Well, not so as you'd notice it—I spotted Seavey for a crook and took that sample to check up with his bill. Well, why don't you say it? You know you think that I'm tight—stingy—skinflint—"

She flung soft arms about him, kissed him moistly, several times.

"Oh, no! No! Of course I don't! I think it was wonderful of you—simply wonderful, to foresee things like that. Oh, Asa, if you only knew how I feel about you. . . ."

He discharged three office-workers that morning and cancelled a fat order because the salesman who had secured it looked happy.

IV

"SAY, Myrtle, you take a tip and lay off that John of yours—a little joshing don't hurt, but the way you kid that good old scout to his face is something fierce. You're taking a long chance—and he's worth jollying along, too."

Miss Myrtle Mae Merry inspected a powdery nose in the mirror of a heavily jewelled vanity-case and laughed casually, displaying sharp, widely-separated teeth—a sign, always, that their possessor will travel and grow rich. Myrtle Mae had travelled extensively and her prospects of fulfilling the rest of her destiny were not discouraging.

"Forget it, Mame. Don't you see how he eats it alive? Slams is his dish. The way I made my hit was calling him Grandpa and asking him what he did for his rheumatism. Them kind likes it. If you know better, see whether the salve stuff can get you one like this. *I* got it by telling him he reminded me of the oldest, tightest, homeliest guy in Bridgeport . . ."

She paused.

"I hate to do it, he's such a good scout. I guess it's safe to begin calling him Asa, anyway."

I MUST BE GETTING OLD

By Rilla Nelson

I MUST be getting old.
I have kept my present maid a year, even though she is very pretty.
I enjoy playing with my friends' children.
I think the present fashions are hideous.
I have no desire to flirt with other men.
I am perfectly contented with my husband.
I certainly must be getting old.

THOSE who always speak well of women know them only half-way; those who always speak ill of them either know them completely or don't know them at all.

FROM THE JOURNAL OF MADAME LEANDRE

By Helen Woljeska

I

HOLD your head up proudly, keep the light of courage in your eyes and the richness of self-reliance in your spirit. The moment you give up, everybody's feet will pass over you. . . and, first of all, the feet you love.

II

You wish to remodel the universe? And only an atom is within your power—your own soul. Still, if you make your own soul into a thing of beauty, you beautify the universe.

III

To create in our own life the kind of life we would find beautiful in others, that is happiness.

IV

The more we penetrate life and love, the more mysterious it appears, the more beautiful—and the more terrible.

V

If it was worth while for a God to create this world, it should be worth while for us to people it with subtly exquisite personalities.

VI

No matter how many joys he burnt to cinders, how many idols be overturned and ideals fallen to the dust—one thing always remains. It is the possibility of bearing the unbearable, of wrenching the ecstatic bitter joy of triumph out of our suffering and desolation.

VI

Banish "what might have been" and "what should be." Accept as right everything that Fate decrees. But you yourself—are you doing your part well? Does your life stand as a fine, proud, self-sufficient thing, in harmony with the laws of its Maker, and bending neither to explanation nor apology? If this is so, all is well. Nothing else need concern you.

VIII

If the little round of your daily life grows unbearably tight and dark with gloom—shake it too—leave it behind! Plunge into nature. Live the glad, open life of the seasons, the life of the trees and flowers. Be a plant—be a bird! Every day will bring its own reward. Showers and sunshine alike will bless. And out of this rudimentary, elemental existence you will return to your own individual task with new zest and richness of life.

IX

Wherever I pass with my little lamp of life, there I want it to shed the light of sympathy and gladness and beauty. I want it to radiate the brilliance of truth (as far as I was able to win it for my own), and the glory of hope—hope that all is not only for a day, that we are not as the flowers which bloom in the morning and fade at night . . . that love itself, sin and shame bedraggled though it be, may yet shine again in all the radiance of long forgotten dreams!

X

Let me make the way to the Unknown as glad and beautiful as possible.

WHERE BUT IN AMERICA

By Oscar M. Wolff

CHARACTERS

ROBERT ESPENHAYNE.
MOLLIE ESPENHAYNE.
HILDA.

SCENE: *The Espenhayne dining room.*

THE curtain rises on the Espenhayne dining room. It is furnished with modest taste and refinement. There is a door, center, leading to the living room, and a swinging door, left, leading to the kitchen.

The table is set and Robert and Mollie Espenhayne are discovered at their evening meal. They are educated, well bred, young Americans. Robert is a pleasing, energetic business man of 30; Mollie an attractive woman of 25. The bouillon cups are before them as the curtain rises.

BOB:

Mollie, I heard from the man who owns that house in Kenilworth. He wants to sell the house. He won't rent.

MOLLIE:

I really don't care, Bob. That house was too far from the station and it had only one sleeping porch and you know I want white enamelled woodwork in the bedrooms. But, Bob, I've been terribly stupid!

BOB:

How so, Mollie?

MOLLIE:

You remember the Russells moved to Highland Park last spring?

BOB:

Yes; Ed Russell rented a house that had just been built.

MOLLIE:

A perfectly darling little house! And Fanny Russell once told me that the man who built it will put up a house for anyone who will take a five year lease. And she says that the man is very competent and they are simply delighted with their place.

BOB:

Why don't we get in touch with the man?

MOLLIE:

Wasn't it stupid of me not to think about it? It just flashed into my mind this morning and I sat down at once and sent a special delivery letter to Fanny Russell. I asked her to tell me his name at once, and where we can find him.

BOB:

Good! You ought to have an answer by tomorrow or Thursday and we'll go up north and have a talk with him on Saturday.

MOLLIE:

(*With enthusiasm.*) Wouldn't it be wonderful if he'd build just what we want! Fanny Russell says every de-

tail of their house is perfect. Even the garage; they use it—

BOB:

(*Interrupting.*) Mollie, that's the one thing I'm afraid of about the North Shore plan. I've said repeatedly that I don't want to buy a car for another year or two. But, here you are, talking about a garage already.

MOLLIE:

But you didn't let me finish what I was saying. The Russells have fitted up their garage as a playroom for the children. If we had a garage we could do the same thing.

BOB:

Well, let's keep temptation behind us and not even talk to the man about a garage. If we move up north it must be on an economy basis for a few years; just a half-way step between the apartment and the house we used to plan. You mustn't get your heart set on a car.

MOLLIE:

I haven't even thought of one, dear. (*Bob and Mollie have now both finished the bouillon course and lay down their spoons.*)

MOLLIE:

(*Reaching out her hand to touch the table button and at the same time leaning across the table and speaking very impressively.*) Bob, I'm about to ring for Hilda!

BOB:

What of it?

MOLLIE:

(*Decidedly and with a touch of impatience.*) You know very well, what of it. I don't want Hilda to hear us say *one* word about moving away from the South Side!

BOB:

(Protesting.) But Mollie—

MOLLIE:

(*Interrupting hurriedly and holding her finger to her lips in warning.*) Psst!

(*The next instance Hilda enters, left. She is a tall, blond Swedish girl, about 25 years old. She is very pretty and carries herself well and looks particularly charming in a maid's dress, with white collars and cuffs and a dainty waitress's apron. Every detail of her dress is immaculate.*)

MOLLIE:

(*Speaking the instant that Hilda appears and talking very rapidly all the time that Hilda remains in the room. While she speaks Mollie watches Hilda rather than Robert, whom she pretends to be addressing.*) In the last game Gert Jones was my partner. It was frame apiece and I dealt and I bid one no trump. I had a very weak no trump, I'll admit that, but I didn't want them to win the rubber. Mrs. Stone bid two spades and Gert Jones doubled her. Mrs. Green passed and I simply couldn't go to three of anything. Mrs. Stone played two spades, doubled, and she made them. Of course, that put them out and gave them the rubber. I think that was a very foolish double of Gert Jones and then she said it was my fault, because I bid one no trump.

(*As Mollie begins her flow of words Bob first looks at her in open-mouthed astonishment. Then as he gradually comprehends that Mollie is merely talking against time he too turns his eyes to Hilda and watches her closely in her movements around the table. Meanwhile Hilda moves quietly and quickly and pays no attention to anything except the work she has in hand. She carries a small serving tray and as Mollie speaks Hilda first takes the bouillon cups from the table, then brings the carving knife and fork from the sideboard and places them before Robert and then, with the empty bouillon cups, exits left. Bob and Mollie are both watching Hilda as she goes out. The instant the door swings shut behind her, Mollie relaxes with a sigh and Robert leans across the table to speak.*)

BOB:

Mollie, why not be sensible about this thing! Have a talk with Hilda and find out if she will move north with us.

MOLLIE:

That's just like a man! Then we might not find a house to please us and Hilda would be dissatisfied and suspicious. She might even leave. (*Thoughtfully.*) Of course, I must speak to her before we sign a lease, because I really don't know what I'd do if Hilda refuses to leave the South side. (*More cheerfully.*) But there, we won't think about the disagreeable things until everything else is settled.

BOB:

That's good American doctrine.

MOLLIE:

(*Warningly and again touching her finger to her lips.*) Psst!

(*Hilda enters, left, carrying the meat plates, with a heavy napkin under them.*)

MOLLIE:

(*Immediately resuming her monologue.*) I think my last year's hat will do very nicely. You know it rained all last summer and I really only wore the hat a half a dozen times. Perhaps not that often. I can make a few changes on it; put on some new ribbons you know and it will do very nicely for another year. You remember that hat don't you, dear? (*Bob starts to answer but Mollie rushes right on.*) Of course you do, you remember you said it was so becoming. That's another reason why I want to wear it this summer.

(*Hilda, meanwhile, puts the plates on the table in front of Bob and goes out, left. Mollie at once stops speaking.*)

BOB:

(*Holding his hands over the plates as over a fire and rubbing them together in genial warmth.*) Ah, the good hot plates! She never forgets them. She is a gem, Mollie.

MOLLIE:

(*In great self-satisfaction.*) If you are finally convinced of that, after three years, I wish you would be a little bit more careful what you say the next time Hilda comes in the room.

BOB:

(*In open-mouthed astonishment.*) What!

MOLLIE:

Well, I don't want Hilda to think we are making plans behind her back.

BOB:

(*Reflectively.*) "A man's home is his castle." (*Pauses.*) It's very evident that the Englishman who first said that didn't keep any servants.

(*Telephone bell rings off stage.*)

MOLLIE:

Answer that, Bob.

BOB:

Won't Hilda answer it?

MOLLIE:

(*Standing up quickly and speaking impatiently.*) Very well, I shall answer it myself. I can't ask Hilda to run to the telephone while she is serving the meal.

BOB:

(*Sullenly, as he gets up.*) All right! All right!

(*Bob exits, center. As he does he so Hilda appears at the door, left, hurrying to answer the telephone.*)

MOLLIE:

Mr. Espenhayne will answer it, Hilda.

(*Hilda makes the slightest possible bow of acquiescence, withdraws, left and in a moment reappears with vegetable dishes and small side dishes which she puts before Mrs. Espenhayne. She is arranging these when Bob re-enters, center.*)

BOB:

Somebody for you, Hilda.

HILDA:

(*Surprised.*) For me? O! But I cannot answer eet now. Please ask the party to call later.

(*Hilda speaks excellent English but with some Swedish accent. The noticeable feature of her speech is the precision and great care with which she enunciates every syllable.*)

MOLLIE:

Just take the number yourself, Hilda, and tell the party you will call back after dinner.

HILDA:

Thank you, Messes Aispenhayne.

(*Hilda exits, center. Bob stands watching Hilda, as she leaves the room, and then turns and looks at Mollie with a bewildered expression.*)

BOB:

(*Standing at his chair.*) But, I though Hilda couldn't be running to the telephone while she serves the dinner?

MOLLIE:

But this call is for Hilda, herself. That's quite different, you see.

BOB:

(*Slowly and thoughtfully.*) O, yes! Of course; I see! (*Sits down in his chair.*) That is—I don't quite see!

MOLLIE:

(*Immediately leaning across the table and speaking in a cautious whisper.*) Do you know who it is?

(*Bob closes his lips very tightly and nods yes in a very important manner.*)

MOLLIE:

(*In the same whisper and very impatiently.*) Who?

BOB:

(*Looking around the room as if to see if anyone is in hiding and then putting his hand to his mouth and exaggerating the whisper.*) The Terrible Swede.

MOLLIE:

(*In her ordinary tone and very much exasperated.*) Robert, I've told you a hundred times that you shouldn't refer to—to—the man in that way.

BOB:

And I've told you a hundred times to ask Hilda his name. If I knew his name I'd announce him with as much ceremony as if he were the Swedish Ambassador.

MOLLIE:

(*Disgusted.*) Oh, don't try to be funny! Suppose some day Hilda hears you speak of him in that manner?

BOB:

You know that's mild compared to what you think of him. Suppose some day Hilda learns what you think of him?

MOLLIE:

I think very well of him and you know it. Of course, I dread the time when she marries him, but I wouldn't for the world have her think that we speak disrespectfully of her or her friends.

BOB:

"A man's home is his castle."

(*Mollie's only answer is a gesture of impatience. Mollie and Bob sit back in their chairs to await Hilda's return. Both sit with fingers interlaced, hands resting on the edge of the table in the attitude of school children at attention. A long pause. Mollie unclasps her hands and shifts uneasily. Robert does the same. Mollie seeing this, hastily resumes her former attitude of quiet waiting. Robert, however, grows increasingly restless. His restlessness makes Mollie nervous and she watches Robert, and when he is not observing her, she darts quick, anxious glances at the door, center. Bob drains and refills his glass.*)

MOLLIE:

(*She has been watching Robert and every time he shifts or moves she unconsciously does the same and finally*

she breaks out nervously.) I don't understand this at all! Isn't today Tuesday?

BOB:

What of it?

MOLLIE:

He usually calls up on Wednesdays and comes to see her on Saturdays.

BOB:

And takes her to the theater on Thursdays and to dances on Sundays. He's merely extending his line of attack.

(*Another long pause, then Bob begins to experiment to learn whether the plates are still hot. He gingerly touches the edges of the upper plate in two or three places. It seems safe to handle. He takes hold of upper and lower plates boldly, muttering, as he does so, "Cold as—" Drops the plates with a clatter and a smothered oath. Shakes his fingers and blows on them. Meanwhile Mollie is sitting very rigid, regarding Bob with a fixed stare and beating a vigorous tattoo on the table cloth with her fingers Bob catches her eye and cringes under her gaze. He drains and refills his glass. He studies the walls and the ceiling of the room, meanwhile still nursing his fingers. Bob steals a side-long glance at Mollie. She is still staring at him. He turns to his water goblet. Picks it up and holds it up to the light. He rolls the stem between his fingers, squinting at the light through the water.*)

BOB:

(*Reciting slowly as he continues to gaze at the light.*) Starlight! Starbright! Will Hilda talk to him all night!

MOLLIE:

(*In utter disgust.*) Oh, stop that singing.

(*Bob puts down his glass, then drinks the water and refills the glass. He then turns his attention to the silverware and cutlery before him. He examines it critically, then lays a teaspoon carefully on the cloth before him, and attempts the trick of picking it up with the first finger in the bowl and the thumb at the point of the handle. After one or two attempts the spoon shoots on the floor, far behind him. Mollie jumps at the noise. Bob turns slowly and looks at the spoon with an injured air, then turns back to Mollie with a silly, vacuous smile. He now lays all the remaining cutlery in a straight row before him.*)

BOB:

(*Slowly counting the cutlery and silver, back and forth.*) Eeny, meeny, miney, mo. Catch a—" (*Stops suddenly, as an idea comes to him. Gazes thoughtfully at Mollie, for a moment, then begins to count over again.*) Eeny, meeny, miney, mo; Hilda's talking to her beau. If we holler, she may go, Eny, mee—

MOLLIE:

(*Interrupting and exasperated to the verge of tears.*) Bob, if you don't stop all that nonsense, I shall scream! (*In a very tense tone.*) I believe I'm going to have one of my sick headaches! (*Puts her hand to her forehead.*) I know it; I can feel it coming on!

BOB:

(*In a soothing tone.*) Hunger, my dear, hunger! When you have a good warm meal you'll feel better.

MOLLIE:

(*In despair.*) What do you suppose I ought to do?

BOB:

Go out in the kitchen and fry a couple of eggs.

MOLLIE:

O! be serious! I'm at my wits end! Hilda never did anything like this before.

BOB:

(*Suddenly quite serious.*) What does that fellow do for a living, anyhow.

MOLLIE:

How should I know?

BOB:

Didn't you ever ask Hilda?

MOLLIE:

Certainly not, Hilda doesn't ask me about your business, why should I pry into her affairs?

BOB:

(*Taking out his cigarette case and lighting a cigarette.*) Mollie, I see you're strong for the Constitution of the United States.

MOLLIE:

(*Suspiciously.*) What do you mean by that?

BOB:

The Constitution says: "Whereas it is a self-evident truth that all men are born equal"— (*With a wave of the hand.*) Hilda and you, and the Terrible Swede and I and—

MOLLIE:

(*Interrupting.*) Bob, you're such a *heathen! That's not in the Constitution.* That's in the Bible!

BOB:

Well, wherever it is, until this evening I never realized what personage Hilda is.

MOLLIE:

You can make fun of me all you please, but I know what's right! Your remarks don't influence me in the least —not in the least!

BOB:

(*Murmurs thoughtfully and feelingly.*) How true! (*Abruptly.*) Why don't they get married? Do you know that?

MOLLIE:

All I know is that they are waiting until his business is entirely successful so that Hilda won't have to work.

BOB:

Well, the Swedes are pretty careful of their money. The chances are Hilda has a neat little nest egg laid by.

MOLLIE:

(*Hesitating and doubtfully.*) That's one thing that worries me a little. I think Hilda puts money—into—into—into the young man's business.

BOB:

(*Indignantly.*) Do you mean to tell me that this girl gives her money to that fellow and you don't try to find out a thing about him? Who he is or what he does? I suppose she supports the loafer.

MOLLIE:

(*With dignity.*) He's not a loafer. I've seen him and I've talked with him and I know he's a gentleman.

BOB:

Mollie, I'm getting tired of all that kind of drivel. I believe now-a-days women give a good deal more thought to pleasing their maids than they do to pleasing their husbands.

MOLLIE:

(*Demurely.*) Well, you know, Bob, your maid can leave you much easier than your husband can (*Pauses thoughtfully.*) and I'm sure she's much harder to replace.

BOB:

(*Very angry, looking at his watch, throwing his napkin on the table and standing up.*) Mollie, our dinner has been interrupted for fifteen minutes while Hilda entertains her (*with sarcasm*) gentleman friend. If you won't stop it, I will. (*Steps toward the door center.*)

MOLLIE:

(*Sternly, pointing to Bob's chair.*) Robert, sit down!

(*Bob pauses, momentarily, and at the instant Hilda enters, center, meeting Bob, face to face. Both are startled. Bob in a surly manner walks back to his place at the table. Hilda follows, excited and eager. Bob sits down and Hilda stands for a moment at the table smiling from one to the other and evidently anxious to say something. Bob*

and Mollie are severe and unfriendly. They gaze at Hilda coldly. Slowly Hilda's enthusiasm cools and she becomes again the impassive servant.

HILDA:

Aixcuse me, Meeses Aispenhayne, I am very sorry. I bring the dinner right in. (*Hilda exits left.*)

BOB:

It's all nonsense. (*Touches the plates again, but this time even more cautiously than before. This time he finds they are entirely safe to handle.*) These plates are stone cold now.

(*Hilda enters, left, with meat platter. Places it before Bob. He serves the meat and Mollie starts to serve the vegetables. Hilda hands Mollie her meat plate.*)

MOLLIE:

Vegetables?

(*Bob is chewing on his meat and does not answer. Mollie looks at him inquiringly. But his eyes are on his plate.*)

MOLLIE:

(*Repeating.*) Vegetables?
(*Still no answer from Bob.*)

MOLLIE:

(*Very softly under her breath.*) H'mm.

(*Mollie helps herself to vegetables and then dishes out a portion which she hands to Hilda, who in turn places the dish beside Bob. When both are served Hilda stands for a moment back of the table. She clasps and unclasps her hands in a nervous manner, seems about to speak, but as Bob and Mollie pay no attention to her she slowly and reluctantly turns, and exits left. Mollie takes one or two bites of the meat and then gives a quick glance at Bob. He is busy chewing at his meat and Mollie quietly lays down her knife and fork and turns to the vegetables.*)

BOB:

(*Chewing desperately on his meat.*) Tenderloin, I believe?

MOLLIE:

(*Sweetly.*) Yes, dear.

BOB:

(*Imitating Mollie a moment back.*) H'mm! (*He takes one or two more hard bites.*) Mollie, I have an idea.

MOLLIE:

I'm relieved.

BOB:

(*Savagely.*) Yes, you will be when you hear it. When we get that builder's name from Fanny Russell, we'll tell him that instead of a garage, which we don't need, he can build a special telephone booth off the kitchen. Then while Hilda serves the dinner— (*Bob stops short, as Hilda bursts in abruptly, left, and comes to the table.*)

HILDA:

Aixcuse me, Meeses Aispenhayne, I am so excited.

MOLLIE:

(*Anxiously.*) Is anything wrong, Hilda?

HILDA:

(*Explosively.*) Meeses Aispenhayne, Meester Leendquist he say you want to move to Highland Park.

(*Bob and Mollie simultaneously drop their knives and forks and look at Hilda in astonishment and wonder.*)

MOLLIE:

What?

BOB:

Who?

HILDA:

(*Repeats very rapidly.*) Meester Leendquist, he say you look for house on North Shore!

MOLLIE:

(*Utterly overcome at Hilda's knowledge and at a loss for words of denial.*) We move to the North Shore? How ridiculous! Hilda, where did you get such an idea? (*Turns to Robert.*) Robert, did you ever hear anything so

laughable? (*She forces a strained laugh.*) Ha! Ha! Ha!

(*Robert has been looking at Hilda in dumb wonder. At Mollie's question he turns to her in startled surprise. He starts to answer, gulps, swallows hard and then coughs violently.*)

MOLLIE:

(*Very sharply, after waiting a moment for Bob to answer.*) Robert Espenhayne, will you stop that coughing and answer me!

BOB:

(*Between coughs and drinking a glass of water.*) Egh! Egh! Excuse me! Something, egh! egh! stuck in my throat.

MOLLIE:

(*Turning to Hilda.*) Some day we might want to move north, Hilda, but not now! Oh no, not now!

BOB:

Who told you that, Hilda?

HILDA:

Meester Leendquist.

MOLLIE:

(*Puzzled.*) Who is Mr. Lindquist?

HILDA:

(*Surprised.*) Meester Leendquist—(*Pauses, a trifle embarrassed.*) Meester Leendquist ees young man who just speak to me on telephone. He come to see me every Saturday.

BOB:

Oh, Mr. Lindquist, the—the—Ter—

MOLLIE:

(*Interrupting, frantically and waving her hands at Bob.*) Yes, yes, of course. You know—Mr. Lindquist! (*Bob catches himself just in time and Mollie settles back with a sigh of relief, then turns to Hilda with a puzzled air.*) But where did Mr. Lindquist get such an idea?

HILDA:

Mrs. Russell tell heem so.

MOLLIE:

(*Now entirely bewildered.*) What Mrs. Russell?

HILDA:

Meeses Russell—your friend.

MOLLIE:

(*More and more at sea.*) Mrs. Edwin Russell who comes to see me—every now and then?

HILDA:

Yes.

MOLLIE:

But how does Mrs. Russell know Mr. Lindquist and why should she tell Mr. Lindquist that we expected to move to the North Shore?

HILDA:

Meester Leendquist, he build Messrs Russell's house. That ees hees business. He build houses on North Shore and he sell them and rent them.

(*Bob and Mollie look at each other and at Hilda in wonder and astonishment as the situation slowly filters into their brains. A long pause.*)

BOB:

(*In awe and astonishment.*) You mean that Mr. Lindquist, the young man who comes to see you every—every—every now and then—is the same man who put up the Russell house?

HILDA:

Yes, Meester Aispenhayne.

BOB:

(*Slowly.*) And when Mrs. Espenhayne (*points to Mollie*) wrote to Mrs. Russell (*jerks his thumb to indicate the North.*) Mrs. Russell told Mr. Lindquist, (*jerks his thumb in opposite direction.*) And Mr. Lindquist telephoned to you? (*Points to Hilda.*)

HILDA:

Yes, Meester Aispenhayne. (*Nodding.*)

BOB:

(*Very thoughtfully and slowly.*)

H'mm! (*Then slowly resuming his meal and speaking in mock seriousness, in subtle jest at Mollie, and imitating her tone of a moment or two back.*) But of course, you understand, Hilda, we don't want to move to the North Shore now! Oh, no, not now!

HILDA:

(*Somewhat crestfallen.*) Yes, Meester Aispenhayne.

BOB:

(*Reflectively.*) But, of course, if Mr. Linquist builds houses, we might look. Yes, we might look.

HILDA:

(*In growing confidence and enthusiasm.*) Yes, Meester Aispenhayne, and he build such beautiful houses and so cheap. He do so much heemself. Hees father was carpenter and he work hees way through Uneeversity of Mennesota and study architecture and then he go to Uneeversity of Eelenois and study landscape gardening, and now he been in business for heemself sex years. And oh, Meeses Aispenhayne, you must see hees own home! You will love eet, eet ees so beautiful. A little house, far back from the road. You can hardly see eet for the trees and the shrubs, and een the summer the roses grow all around eet. Eet is just like the picture book!

MOLLIE:

(*In the most perfunctory tone, utterly without interest or enthusiasm.*) How charming! (*Pauses thoughtfully, then turns to Hilda, anxiously.*) Then I suppose, Hilda, if we should decide to move up to the North Shore you would go with us?

HILDA:

(*Hesitatingly.*) Yes, Meeses Aispenhayne. (*Pauses.*) But I theenk I must tell you thees spring Mr. Lindquist and I aixpect to get married. Mr. Lindquist business ees very good. (*With a quick smile and a glance from one to the other.*) You know, I am partner with heem. I put all my money een Mr. Lindquist's business too.

(*Mollie and Bob gaze at each other in complete resignation and surrender.*)

BOB:

(*Quite seriously after a long pause.*) Hilda, I don't know whether we will move north or not, but the next time Mr. Lindquist comes here, I want you to introduce me to him. I'd like to know him. You ought to be very proud of a man like that.

HILDA:

(*Radiant with pleasure.*) Thank you, Meester Aispenhayne.

MOLLIE:

Yes, indeed, Hilda, Mr. Espenhayne has often said what a fine young man Mr. Lindquist seems to be. We want to meet him and Mr. Espenhayne and I will talk about the house and then we will speak to Mr. Lindquist. (*Then weakly.*) Of course, we didn't expect to move north for a long time, but of course, if you expect to get married, and Mr. Lindquist builds houses— (*Her voice dies out. Long pause.*)

HILDA:

Thank you, Meeses Aispenhayne, I tell Mr. Leendquist.

(*Hilda stands at the table a moment longer, then slowly turns and moves toward door, left. Bob and Mollie watch her and as she moves away from the table Bob turns to Mollie. At this moment Hilda stops, turns suddenly and returns to the table.*)

HILDA:

Oh, Meeses Aispenhayne, I forget one theeng!

MOLLIE:

What now, Hilda?

HILDA:

Meester Leendquist say eef you and Meester Aispenhayne want to look at property on North Shore, I shall let heem know and he meet you at station weeth hees automobile.

CURTAIN.

THE FIGURE

By T. C. Delano

I have killed my model.

* * *

I am a sculptor.

My figure was to depict "Hate."

I took for my model a woman whom I had forsaken to marry a beautiful young girl.

I took her for my model because I wished to portray the devouring antipathy that would gleam from her eyes as she watched the man who had offended her.

Each day she took her fee with consuming animosity and had I touched her she would have clawed me with her sharp fingernails.

I carved her as she was, the personification of Hate. As I worked a connoisseur came to my studio.

When the marble was carved, "Name it," I said to him.

When he departed I gazed feverishly upon it.

He had named my figure aptly.

* * *

I have killed my model.

I had carved her as she was. . . .

The connoisseur named my figure "Love."

THE PRESENCE

By Hortense Flexner

YOU called me and I was not near,
You sent my name into the gray
Of empty dusk; I did not hear.
The moment passed—you turned away.

And I late coming, felt the air
Freshen my dream with touch of you,
And knew, by the heart trembling where
You stood. All night I knew!

PROLOGUE

By Vincent Starrett

THE young woman wore a leopard skin coat that enhanced her odd beauty. She stood in the station lounge in the glare of many lights, tapping a bronze boot impatiently on the flags. The train was late.

Scarlett, the handsome, looked on her with captured eyes. . . . He was more than half inclined to forget an engagement of a delicate nature, which even then was pressing; to forego a rapturous certainty for an ecstatic conjecture. The lure of this magnificent girl affected him powerfully. . . . She was tall and slender, with a peculiar something about her that suggested the beast she impersonated; she was dark, her hair as black as the deuce of spades, which is just twice as black as the ace. Her face—it was illegally lovely!

The handsome Scarlett broke his engagement with a slight shrug. He advanced toward the paragon, pausing at the right distance.

"O-o-oh!" he breathed, with rising inflection. And added with the naïve wonderment of a child:

"Look at the leopard!"

The lady in the leopard skin immediately flushed crimson. In her embarrassment she half turned. Then she controlled herself and stiffened, her cheeks flaming.

"I love leopards," murmured the soft voice, now close beside her.

A pair of blazing eyes thrust him through and then the girl swung back to her original position.

A vague alarm entered the mind of each at the same moment. The young woman thought:

"Suppose — suppose — suppose—the train doesn't come — come — come soon!" Scarlett, the handsome, thought:

"I suppose that damned train will show up in a minute. . . ."

The girl half turned again, scanning the long room furtively from beneath long lashes, looking for prospective assistance should it be required. For just an instant her eyes rested on Scarlett. The handsomeness of his face, unnoticed on the occasion of her first indignant glance, surprised her; troubled her.

"What a face!" she thought.

Suddenly she tightened her lips to repress a suggestion of liking for the scapegrace. Her thoughts continued: "I never believed a man could be so handsome!"

"Lovely leopard!" breathed the handsome Scarlett, at her side.

She wheeled abruptly, angered again by his impertinence. He smiled cherubically.

"Are you deliberately trying to annoy me?" she flared at him. "If you are, I shall call an officer and have you arrested."

"On the contrary," babbled the handsome one, delighted with having forced a conversation, "I am deliberately trying to please you. I am quite sincere when I say that I love leopards."

Her eyes snapped at the repetition of the impudent remark.

"I fail to see how your zoological preferences affect me," she remarked, icily.

Scarlett smiled inanely.

"Apparently, you don't believe me. I can't help it. It's a heritage of . . . something! Since I was a child I've been that way. Above all other animals I love leopards."

The calm insolence of it was funny enough. The leopard girl fought down a desire to smile, desperately. Yet he was insufferable, and she was lowering herself beneath contempt in exchanging words with him.

"If you do not leave me immediately I shall seek help," she said. "I am not interested in your peculiarities, inherited or otherwise. I do not know you, and I refuse to talk with you. . . . Please go!" she concluded distractedly.

A thought of that white, handsome face in a dark cell crossed her mind . . . placed there through her action. She could see the deep, tragic, laughing, insolent eyes peering from between great bars . . .

"Lovely leopard!" murmured the supreme ass, stepping nearer.

Something seemed to snap in her brain; she knew that in a moment she must scream.

A quick footfall sounded, a hearty voice was saying:

"Miss Archer! How do you do?"

"Tertium quid," giggled the handsome Scarlett.

"Mr. Inness!" She greeted the bearded newcomer with a gasp of relief. "I'm so glad—this gentleman—"

"Scarlett!" said Mr. Inness, seizing the hand of the beautiful one; passing an arm around his shoulders. "Deuced glad to see you. Ah, you rascal! So you and Miss Archer are acquainted."

"Ah, yes," drawled Scarlett. "Our acquaintance has been brief but—ah—delightful." He added, maliciously: "You know, Ralph, how fond I always was of leopards? Perhaps you can reassure Miss Archer on that score. I have had difficulty in convincing her of the sincerity of my affection for those charming animals."

Mr. Inness laughed.

"Don't let him tease you, Miss Archer," he admonished. "He teases everybody."

A great wonderment was growing in the girl's mind; her face reflected some of it. *Did* she know this man who, apparently, was so intimate with a common friend? *Had* she met him somewhere, at some time? Could she ever have forgotten that laughing, handsome face? Yet there was distinct relief in her emotions. It had turned out not so badly.

The tardy train rumbled into the station with spasmodic breathings.

"Taking this train?" queried Mr. Inness, gaily. "Then excuse me, please. I've just come in. Got a date. . . ."

He shook hands quickly and vanished.

Scarlett boldly seized the leopard's arm and stalked through the train-shed to the waiting coaches.

They seated themselves silently.

"Do you go to Oak Park?" he asked, after a pause. The train started noisily. She nodded briefly.

"Knowing me so well," she said, then, after a moment, "you should know where I live."

There was still a certain acerbity in her tone, and there was distinct curiosity in her question.

"Knowing you so well?" echoed Scarlett.

"Didn't you know me?" she asked fiercely. "Do you mean to say you *didn't* know me?"

"What makes you think I did?" he countered, quizzically raising his brows.

"Why—Mr. Inness—we both know him—"

"That is sufficient, I grant," sagely nodded Scarlett.

"Oh!" she breathed suddenly. "You didn't know me, after all! You just took advantage of the opportunity he offered—! Oh, I loathe you!" . . . The last in a vivid whisper.

"I am sorry," smiled Scarlett, no whit disturbed. "I assure you it is a solemn fact that I *do* love leopards."

"Why do you talk in that idiotic strain?" she flared. "Leopards! My God!" She relapsed into silence.

The train scurried faster into the darkness.

Scarlett leaned forward, turning his head slightly, and looked squarely into her eyes. The handsomeness of his

face made her gasp. Deliberately he stroked the short hair of her leopard sleeve.

"Honestly," he confided, with the guileless naïveté of a child, "I love—"

Again the desire to smile bubbled irresistibly within her; she wanted to shriek with laughter. It would not down. It struggled to her lips and curved them deliciously. She did not endeavor to restrain the laugh that followed.

"You fool!" she cried, in a low, thrilling voice. "Oh, you fool!"

He leaned back with a little sigh and a smile, and his eyes became vague and introspective. After a moment his arm slipped down and clung to her narrow waist. He bent close, and a strand of her hair swept his face.

"Lovely leopard!" he murmured. . . .

DRAMATIC CRITICISM

By John E. Rosser

SEEING that the world is indeed a stage, with cosmic lighting fixtures of sun and moon and stars, with majestic scenery of cloud-capped mountains and towering forests and vasty deeps, and with compelling effects of lightning and thunder crash, I think that, having Destiny and Eternity and God in the flies to prompt us—

We usually put on a pretty darned rotten show.

LOVE SONG

By David Morton

SO, though across the sky
A million stars are hurled:
This bower . . . and you . . . and I
Make all our world.

So, though the black clouds blow,
And crying wind, and rain;
Here . . . in the lamp's warm glow
Is all our world again.

THE LOVELY LADIES

By John Allen

I DRANK seventeen cocktails with them.

One wore azure the color of her eyes; another's purple gown rivalled the mystic shadows of hers; a green-eyed one was dressed in scintillating emerald; one in yellow had narrow topaz orbs.

"We like you," they said. "When you return to your wife, we shall go with you."

"Lovely ladies, please do not follow me," I cried, and fled.

Avoiding lighted streets, I reached home, entering by a rear window.

Breathlessly I listened for sound of pursuit.

To my nostrils came the fragrance of violet sachet.

Filled with terror, I struck a match.

There they stood: the azure one, the mystic purple one, the green one, and the one in yellow.

* * *

"John," came the petulant voice of my wife. "You know I always lay out your pajamas for you. Do come out of my clothes closet!"

A SONG

By Lizette Woodworth Reese

LOVERS and lovers pass
Across the little grass;
But where are you and I?
Not even our ghosts go by.

You bide with memories,
Your head upon your knees;
And I am long since dead;
A stone is at my head.

ALL wives mistrust the husband who was an ardent lover. And since all wives believe that their husbands wooed them ardently, all husbands are mistrusted.

THE 'SCUTCHEON 'SCAPES

By Richmond Brooks Barrett

I

BEALE TERRY was being jocular to no purpose; sitting beside his wife's bed, he had for half an hour vainly striven to amuse her. To his hearty laughs at his own pleasantries she would respond merely with a wan smile or a feeble shrug. She seemed ill and weary and vaguely querulous. Suddenly the muffled strum of a piano reached them; he got up eagerly and, modulating elaborately his footsteps as he had not been controlling his voice, hurried into the next room and opened a door. As he came brightly back, the strains of a Debussy Prelude sounded a rippling greeting to his wife from beyond the opened door.

"I say, doesn't she play well?" he commented. "She's in your loungingroom giving you a morning serenade."

"Giving *me*—?" his pretty wife weakly wondered.

She lay still, her head bent slightly in critical attention.

Then,

"*Why* does she try Debussy?" she complained.

"Because she does him so wonderfully," he asserted chivalrously.

"Nonsense!" she quavered. "She should spend her time on 'Alpine Symphonies.' She tramps through 'Voiles' as if she had on great boots for climbing and were planting a crooked stick in the boulders. She sounds so—" she hesitated for the apt term of condemnation — "so healthy," she at last brought out.

He showed himself unconvinced. "Why, she has a charming touch; and her technique!"

"Oh! Touch and technique; I hate the old words." She almost whimpered over the dreadful terms. "But of course Virginia is the type you men like; she would nurse you through sickness so competently; but she never herself would get ill on your hands. These healthy women!"

"Virginia's *your* friend, not mine," Beale assured her. "You know, Freddy, that for me a woman has to be delicate, so fragile that she must be kept on a high shelf—where nobody touches her except to dust her."

"You mean where nobody has to bother to dust her, Beale, dear. I'm already so thickly coated that I simply sneeze all my energy away. You've put me on the shelf and left me there." A sadness of resignation gloomed through her smile. "And my name is Fredericka; pet-names are middle class."

"You are perverse this morning," he said. "You're on the improve—that's evident."

She sighed. "You say that to comfort yourself. But why has Virginia persisted in staying around all these days to cheer me up? She doesn't amuse me—she annoys me."

He could match this. "And why does Cass Godfrey stick here to cheer *me* up? He knows I think him an ass."

She was lucid. "You think him an ass because he understands women. How he 'sizes up' poor Virginia! Naturally he says nothing—he is a gentleman—but one can see, when one understands men."

With a pouting gesture of dismissal she turned away from him, nestling her tiny nose into the pillow.

"Please go, Beale—you have been

sweet to bore yourself with me for so long. I want to sleep a little."

She passively accepted his loud kiss. After he had left her she lay listening. He and Virginia were evidently having a jolly time in her lounging-room. Soon the piano-playing began again, assertively, as if sounding the note of challenge.

"They're playing duets," she murmured to herself.

With a dainty toss of her head she sat up and rang for her maid.

"Renée," she ordered, as the maid tip-toed sympathetically towards her, "get me into my most romantic tea-gown and then tell Mr. Godfrey he may come and read Swinburne to me. And shut the door of my dressing-room at once."

II

Propped up in bed with pillows, she peered at herself in the mirror in the ceiling and compared her fragile beauty with the rotund Venus who lay on a cloud beside the glass and allowed fat Cupids to scramble over her. How vulgar Beale was to bring such tasteless things over from France and set them up in the bedrooms of his charming Colonial house!

Fredericka, as she lay wide-eyed in her bed, was working out an intense little plan; her pretty illness was part of her game. How deeply, she wondered, was she involving Beale with Virginia? She had nothing vital against Virginia, nor, for that matter, against Beale; but he bored her unfortunately and had some time since driven her to look about her for harmless diversion. She felt it would be a positive aid, an act of self-preservation, to compromise him somehow. It would give her a power over him and enable her to range more at large. She felt that she knew her husband: he would never be anything but stupid and innocent in his treatment of women; but that very stupidity and innocence could be made to appear consummate guile.

For weeks she had been flirting whimsically with a young chap, a certain Fairfax Towne, who had recently bought the estate adjoining Beale's; the affair was to reach tonight a culmination that was beginning even in prospect to frighten her. Poor Cass Godfrey she had been employing fitfully as a stalking-horse; while she pretended jealousy of Virginia, she was attempting to force Beale into a suspicion of Godfrey that would occupy his time and prevent him from perceiving the figure of Towne on his horizon.

Now, with Beale in his clumsy fashion strumming over duets and giving her the chance to draw conclusions of superb subtlety, with Godfrey playing into her hands and with the stage set for the rendezvous between her and Towne that she had worked up to, Fredericka suddenly felt herself terror-stricken.

She wished, somehow, that she hadn't involved herself so cleverly; she shivered at the thought that she hadn't given herself a loop-hole of escape from the meeting with Towne arranged for that night. Fredericka had been too much absorbed in her plotting to take into account her timidity, her cowardice. She had, like a true creative artist, fallen in love with her machinations and had forgotten that she must be the protagonist of the drama she was constructing. How *could* she go through with it? She had never been able to face big issues; she had always before been careful and to the most delightful degree safe. Why at last had she allowed herself to be driven into real peril? Could she be sure that Towne would be merely charming and considerate? Well, she was in for it; she must conquer her weakness and be reckless. With a sigh, she remembered that she was not alone; the machinery she had set in motion was working smoothly before her eyes and she was powerless to turn it off.

Godfrey, all this while, was striving to make his voice throb and pulsate with pagan ardour as he read the "Hymn to Proserpine." Sitting at a polite distance from Mrs. Terry, he occasionally stole a deferential glance at

her; he was beginning to feel tremendously satisfied at the combined effect of his baritone intensity and Swinburne's music. With a heave of the bosom he exhaled,

"Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean. The world has grown grey from thy breath."

Mrs. Terry turned her pallid beauty full on him. Sighing, he was about to continue his reading, when she brought him up short.

"That bores me," she announced. "It's just Gautier warmed over. Talk to me."

He showed his disappointment, but complied after a last lingering glance at the poem.

"Beale and Virginia are hitting it off rather well," he vouchsafed. "They have been playing duets for an hour."

"I know, I know. Virginia must have brought volumes of music with her. I never allow duets in the house; I think them immoral."

He smiled. "Beale is such a fascinating chap."

She frowned vaguely, as if missing the connection.

Then,

"Do you think so?" she wistfully asked.

"Why, everybody does," he informed her.

He paused ruminatingly before he followed up his line of thought. "But one would trust Virginia even if she were doing the Prelude to 'Tristan' with Lord Byron."

She delicately corrected him. "You mean, one would trust Lord Byron in any situation—with Virginia."

"Oh, no!" He was insistent. "Virginia is superb; she is so to be depended upon. May I confess to you, dear Mrs. Terry?"

"If you wish, though you are putting me to sleep."

"Well!" He braced himself. "Of course, you are too clever not to have seen that I'm awfully in love with Virginia."

"Ah, one could never doubt that," she lied beautifully. "Surely that's not your confession?"

She was annoyed. Of course, she wasn't juggling so skilfully from any amatory interest in Godfrey; but this possible connection between her friends might become a complication, might mix her up with her bag of tricks. She felt herself once more the creative artist; she was forgetting her fright in the endeavour to prevent this difficulty from hurting the effectiveness of her drama.

"No. But I'm scandalously jealous of the dear girl—that's my confession. When she smiles at another fellow, I rant; and when she rests her hands invitingly on the same keyboard with Beale's hands, imagine my state!"

"Please don't say insulting things about my husband's hands," she wearily warned him.

He laughed. "I'm not yet completely shriven. You know, I hadn't great hopes of amusing you with this silly reading; I was afraid I should set you dozing. But I wanted, selfishly, incorrigibly, to make Virginia uneasy."

"You are hopeless; you are impossible," she moaned. "Go away, I implore."

He rose apologetically, picking up his book as he did so. At the same moment the door of the dressing-room opened and Beale Terry's heavy footsteps approached.

It was the perfect time for a crisis; Fredericka couldn't resist. With a flash of energy, she leaned towards Godfrey, snatched Swinburne from him, and, opening at random, began sentimentally, languorously, to quote:

" Vois tu dans les roses mortes
Amour qui sourit caché?
O mon amant, à nos portes
L'as-tu vu couché?"

She gave the words a thrilling quality, meeting gently the wrath in Beale's eyes. As he had hurried through his wife's dressing-room on his way to take her in his arms and try again boisterously to kiss away her petulance, he

had heard confused sounds ending in the rhapsodic tones of her voice crooning forth Mary Stuart's song. Now he simply stood in the doorway, his hands thrust deep into his pockets, his eyes glaring first at her, then at the dazed Godfrey, who had dropped back in confusion upon his chair.

"You have been neglecting our friend," she explained quietly, "so I have been trying to amuse him. Will you go now, Mr. Godfrey? I think my husband wishes to be alone with me."

Mr. Godfrey ruefully returned her dazzling smile and retired blushing.

When they were alone, she shrugged mockingly.

"Well, Beale, dear?" she queried.

"Virginia and I are going for a ride. We shan't be back before evening." He strove for self-control. "We shan't be back before evening," he repeated.

"Ah! Then I can order luncheon and dinner here, for two." She allowed herself a tone of gaiety, as if at the delightful prospect.

"You shall do nothing of the sort. That pup is to go along if I have to drag him by the collar."

"You are spoiling that exquisite adventure with Virginia—for my sake." She shook her head archly at him.

"Damn Virginia!" he burst out and stormed away muttering.

"He *is* an ass, Beale; you understand men," she called after him.

Then she sank back in her pillow and gave way to uncontrollable laughter.

"He suspects poor Godfrey," she exulted. "Beale is jealous; Beale is jealous—of that dear lamb."

III

As the three cantered away from the house, Beale could have taken his oath that Godfrey glanced mysteriously towards the balcony outside Fredericka's boudoir, as if he had already measured its distance from the ground before sending in an order to the rope-ladder maker of the village. Perhaps, too, he reflected, the cur might be contemplating the possibility of scrambling up that big elm so near her windows.

Virginia, a superb, statuesque blonde, leaned towards Godfrey. He had evidently failed to make her uneasy.

"What *have* you been doing all morning? Beale was sweet at the piano; he's rude to me now, though. A few moments ago he strode up to me and muttered, 'We're going for an all-day ride—do you hear?' What could I do? I was too frightened to refuse. Beale is cross because I strictly enforce my dog's diet even when I'm visiting. Of course, I know as well as anybody that Russian wolf-hounds are obsolete fads, and that Vronsky is a rattle-brained beast; but his two hard-boiled eggs *must* be served three times a day."

Vronsky, loping gracefully beside Virginia's horse, grinned up with stupid pride at her. Beale achieved a sullen smile; he was doing his best to show that he couldn't be teased.

Virginia continued unperturbed. "So often I wish I could be ill; poor dear Fredericka has gained tremendously by being delicate. If one is robust, one must be discreet; but if one is fragile, nothing causes suspicion. We healthy women pay; men think we were born simply to be poked in the ribs and joked with. I want to be sentimental with every chap I meet; instead, I have to be content with discussing beagles or football."

Beale narrowly watched her. Could she be subtly warning him of his wife's temptation and weakness? If so, she was acting like the charming sport she was; he smiled at her.

"Don't be discouraged, old dear," he reassured her "we all love you."

She set her horse galloping. Beale flashed gaily ahead of her; Godfrey, in melancholy abstraction, kept beside her. As a silly rabbit scurried away through the trees ahead of them, Vronsky leaped in pursuit of it. The force of his first bound brought him up short directly in front of Godfrey's horse, which wheeled about and reared in a panic. Godfrey, taken by surprise in a muse, weakly slid off his animal's

back and landed with a thud upon the ground.

"Tie the horses up," Virginia ordered as Beale helped her out of her saddle. In an instant she was sitting beside Godfrey in the road and tenderly laying his wabbling head in her lap.

"He's been knocked silly, that's all," announced Beale brutally. "He's not hurt any."

He was right. Almost before he had finished speaking, Godfrey opened his eyes. That he was not yet fully conscious was evidenced by his first words.

"My darling!" he quavered.

"Be quiet, Cass, dear," admonished Virginia.

Beale could have trampled upon them both. Of course, he reflected as his anger seethed, Virginia was just a fool after all—in other words, just a woman. She was obviously triumphing at her capture of a man. But Godfrey was no fool. All his treachery and guile were discovered in those two words, spoken sub-consciously. How often did clever scoundrels betray themselves in just that fashion! Virginia his darling! Beale could have laughed out bitterly. He wished the fellow had been smashed to pieces, that he, Beale Terry, might have confronted his erring wife with the news. He was assuredly in the mood for tragedy; why had matters assumed merely a farcical turn?

Stroking Godfrey's brow gently, Virginia looked up. "Beale, go back to the house and get some help. We should have brought a footman along. Don't tell Fredericka; she would be alarmed."

"Bring help? What for? He can walk back—can't he?—if he's afraid to get on his horse again."

"Do as I say." She was stern. "And leave Vronsky's hard-boiled eggs that you brought for his luncheon. Poor Cass needs something to stimulate him."

As he stamped away, Beale growled, "What a ding-dashed ass *she* is!"

IV

LATE that night, Fredericka, fully clad and with a heavy wrap over her shoulders, stole out to the balcony outside her boudoir. For a moment she stood irresolute and trembled a little. An impassioned whisper intoning her name floated up to her from below. In terror, she fled back to the door of her room; then, bracing herself with a sort of desperation, she came forward again, and, leaning far over the railing, tossed a sweet, ineffectual smile into the darkness.

As she peered intensely down, she made out the figure she knew must be there—a man standing beside a huge elm tree directly beneath her. His arms were outstretched, his head thrown back.

"Come down, come down, Fredericka darling," he crooned.

She threw him a rhapsodic sigh. "I am yours, Fairfax—forever. Everything in the world is asleep,—but us. Wait for me; nothing can frighten me,—not even the ghostly staircase I must creep down. Wait there for me."

Then suddenly she clutched at her heart.

Mysterious sounds in the house,—the creak of a board, the deadened echo of footsteps in a corridor, the click of a French window opening—had startled her out of her exultation and set her shaking.

"Hide behind that tree!" she gasped out.

The man's arms dropped to his side and he ducked out of sight in the shelter of the ancestral elm.

Beale Terry, meanwhile, in a room adjoining his wife's, had been roused from a deep sleep by the same restrained commotion in the house that had alarmed Fredericka. He sat bolt upright in his bed and fumed. Nothing so innocent as burglary presented itself in his thoughts as an explanation of the confused sounds he had heard. Almost as quickly as wakefulness came to him, he was convinced that he knew what was going on. A rendezvous be-

tween Cass Godfrey and Fredericka was in progress! Didn't this explain the fellow's unnatural satisfaction in escaping unwounded from his tumble? Hadn't he, too, conceivably coached Fredericka in the stages of her perhaps feigned illness? The whole thing was sickening, criminal.

At one bound, Beale cleared the space between the bed and the nearest window. Not two yards from him, drooped prettily over the railing of her balcony, was Fredericka. She turned as he glared out at her and with a charming smile drew her cloak snugly about her to conceal the fact that she was dressed, and indicated the scene below.

The stretch of grass and garden, blotted with great trees and blanched by a floor of white moonlight, presented a romantic picture. The gleam of marble surfaces, the flashes of radiance from the quaint fountain and the lotus pool at a distance were exquisite. From the broad steps of the terrace moved two dim figures into the center of the fetching scene; as Fredericka and Beale watched, the two below turned to each other and embraced enthusiastically. It was easy, now, to recognize them,—they were Godfrey and Virginia.

"We are witnesses of the betrothal kiss," explained Fredericka. "See Godfrey and Virginia,—there. They are so stupidly in love."

The cloud of wrath cleared from Beale's face. Boyishly he climbed from his window out on to his wife's balcony, and drew her gently to him.

"Fredericka, my girl, I have doubted you," he murmured, with a shy smile. "I thought—you and that boy—"

"Never mind, dear," she assured him. "Aren't they silly? They choose perilous meeting-places, when they could so easily have been sentimental with each other in the drawing-room."

Peering over his shoulder, she gazed with wide eyes at the friendly tree below her. Then she cried in a voice a trifle louder than the occasion seemed to warrant:

"I hope you will never doubt me again, dear Beale."

The figure of her erstwhile lover crept out from the protection of the elm, stood still a moment, then skulked away through the shadows until it reached the high wall that separated the Terry grounds from the next estate. The figure climbed the wall and disappeared.

Virginia and Godfrey, in the full light of the moon, still were engrossed in each other.

Fredericka breathed a nervous, uneven sigh.

"Let's go in," she pleaded sweetly. "I am chilly—I shouldn't have got out of bed; and—" she indicated the romantic lovers below, "Virginia and Godfrey are so boring. Watch me carefully, Beale, dear, in future—I advise it."

TO have one's husband fall in love with one all over again . . . to be served with *blanc mange* twice in the same afternoon . . . how the little repetitions of life annoy one!

THE finest loves flame and perish in an afternoon, as glory blinds and vanishes in a day.

THE DEBT

A Psychological Puzzler

By David Plott*

N. B.—The Editors introduce Plott with enthusiasm. He deserves a hearing. Compare him to Tchekov, Gorki, Artzibashef, Przybyszewski. Pooh for Tchekov! Pish for Gorki! Bah for Artzibashef! Pooh, pish and bah for Przbyszewski! Plott has psychology; he has finesse; he has the punch. Moreover, he gets away from the zymotic cellars, jailyards and dissecting-rooms of all that crowd, and moves in refined society. Warning to *The Century Magazine:* Hands off Plott!

I.

"AH," said one of the men seated in lounging chairs, in a club, as far as atmosphere, furniture, and other utensils were concerned, and could be deduced to; it was a club. The man continued with his speech of joy or whatever else it was, it certainly showed he was pleased with something, and that something was in the person of Robert Lawton. "Here he is, the old scoundrel; chasing after girls, and not giving us a chance to get onto him; the slick heart-breaker."

There was a general shout of laughter as Robert walked to the men seated in the group. The group wasn't large—numbering only about half a dozen. He wasn't any slouch, and was undeniably handsome, and he had a smile on his lips—nay, a grin. He walked to them, and after an all-around shaking of hands, he sat down among them.

"Some fine day, eh?" this comment was made by Guy Bates, another of them, also handsome, and looking almost the same as Robert.

"No," the answer was made to Guy's unasked question by Robert, "I haven't been out with any girls or anything, but I have been in the Movies. I guess that answers your questions, doesn't it?" he laughed at their bad guess.

"Anything of interest, that you went there without giving us an invitation?" one of the gentlemen asked, leaning back at ease.

Evidently he didn't expect an answer, or if he did, he didn't seem to think it of any importance at all. The others were the same.

"The show wasn't any too good. The thing that impressed me was the story of one of the pictures. It wasn't very interesting, but it showed a very great truth."

At this everyone became a little interested, for Robert never claimed their attention if he didn't have anything worth while to tell. One lighted a cigar, offered another to another of the party, and when it was refused, leaned forward at attention. Another took a drink of whiskey, brought by a waiter, and drank a toast to himself, and then became attentive. The others did similar things before becoming attentive.

"It showed," continued Robert, "the foolishness of women."

Everyone crowded around a little nearer to Robert, for although he never preached, he always told interesting stories.

"The story ran this way: A young girl, receiving a communication from her brother in the west, decides to visit him. She does. On her arrival, she finds someone who claims to be her brother. She hasn't seen her brother

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for a long time, and she believes him. He proves to be rich, and gives her the luxuries of life, while she loves him like a girl should love her brother, showering him with kisses, hugs, and the like. He retaliates. She meets someone else with whom she falls in love, and her brother forbids her to marry the same. She asserts her love for him, and tells him that she loves her lover more than him. The story goes on, and in the end the lover saves her from him, and she still loves her brother, and lives in the same house with him, and kisses him and so forth. Later she finds that he isn't her brother, but was her brother's partner and had killed her brother. She then hates him, and it ends as all pictures and stories end. The fake brother is killed, and she marries her lover."

He stopped a little, while the others were deep in thought. "Get the point that shows her foolishness?" he added at length.

"Why, of course," Guy answered. "She was foolish for believing the man who claimed to be her brother."

"You're right in a way, but wrong as far as my answer goes. She kissed the man so many times at first, and loved him so much, but when she found he wasn't her brother she didn't love him any more, and when she hears that he had killed her brother she hates him. Understand?" He stopped and the others nodded gloomily.

"But that's not yet the moral," he continued. "The moral is that we people, especially women, seem to think that we owe our relatives love as this shows: She hated him later; or rather, when she found she didn't have to love him and he was not her brother, she didn't love him, which shows that she seemed to think it her duty to love him. That's the moral, and it shows what fools women are," he ended briskly.

There was a silence. All saw the point in Robert's analysis, and they understood. Robert was right. All women were foolish.

"Maybe you're right," Guy said at last, breaking the silence, and looking up at Robert defiantly. "In fact I think you are right, but not all women are foolish. Now, I have a sister, and I know she wouldn't pretend to love me if she didn't, or anyone else."

"You'd change you're mind under these circumstances, and you'd find that she would, if she hadn't seen her brother for about, say, fifteen years," said Robert.

"Well, I haven't seen my sister for almost thirteen years."

"Would you like to make the test?"

"What do you mean?"

"Simply this: Would you want to call your sister, and let someone masquerade as her brother, and after, say, three months inform her of the truth, and you'd see if she wouldn't stop loving him."

"I'd take on your proposition, if it wouldn't embarrass her, and might compromise her, too."

"That's all right." One of the others interrupted.

"Don't worry about that."

"Be a sport."

"It'll be in private—only among us."

"I'll agree to wager the expense of our next vacation trip, and the loser, also, to give your sister a necklace."

"You're on," Guy had agreed at last.

"Good," Robert answered, pleased. "And to repeat, gentlemen, the terms are as follows: Someone to masquerade as Guy Bates. You, Guy Bates, to act as his friend, so that there is no shennanigans. The time of the contest, to be three months, dated from the arrival of your sister. The stake to be the expense of the next vacation of this group, and a necklace of fine pearl, to be given to the girl in the case. The stake to be supplied by the loser. Have I left out anything?"

"None at all," Guy answered. "Except that I may come into the home, and become a suitor, then it will add to the fun, and see if she really loves me when I don't say I'm her brother."

"Great," the group remonstrated, almost ready to burst out in loud laughter. "This'll be worthy to put down in his-

tory, as a great experiment in human emotions."

"That's all very well, but who will masquerade as myself?" Guy interrupted him with this.

A sudden hush came on the group. They had forgotten this phase of the agreement. It sure was dangerous, and though it might be pleasant to play the part, it would be dangerous after she were told the truth. They all seemed to dread playing the part.

"We'll get in a first-class actor," one suggested.

Guy looked at him belligerently, which meant enough.

"Ah, ah, ah," they were interrupted by the laughing of one of the group. "Why not let the one that suggested it take the trouble to be the pseudo Guy Bates? He'll want to be on the inside of things, that's the chance, and a good one it is."

Robert turned pale. It was an awful risk, and other things were in the way.

"Why sure, he should be the one. He's almost a double of Guy himself, and the reason quoted already. Why not?"

"You'll have to take a chance on her looks, but I guess it's no chance at all, if she's Guy's sister. It's a sure thing. Come on." They urged him on to it, and finally he accepted.

And so it was that Florence Bates received a note when she visited the store and postoffice, a few days later. Tearing it open, she read a letter from one who had been so kind to her and her parents:

Dear Florence:

I have just read your last letter with many heart-beatings. I haven't seen you for such a long time, that I would like to see my darling sister once more. It is with the greatest of impatience that I wait for your arrival. I know you will come, for you have never yet refused your dear brother anything.

I know how hard it will be for father and mother to let you go, but I must see you sometime, anyhow, and I think that this would be a good time.

Enclosed is a certified check and a ticket for passage to New York. The check will provide you with necessities and food for a long time, and you will be able to leave more than half of it for father and mother. The presence of the ticket is explained.

I know you'll surely come, so don't try to write back a refusal for it will be of no use.

Your affectionate brother,
Guy Bates.

Underneath was his address, and a P. S. said he'd meet her at the station. She found the check for a large sum enclosed and also the ticket.

She thought about it for a few minutes at the counter. Why did he send for her now? He had not done it before. But she determined to go, as he had been a God-send to the family with his checks, and she really wanted to see him, as it was thirteen years since she had last seen him.

II

THE trains were coming in and out. It certainly was a wonderful exhibition for out-of-towners, but to Guy and Robert it was not. They had been in trains going in and out of the station themselves, many times.

"Wonder what's the matter with the train? It should have come in long ago. What's keeping it?" Robert was fretting around.

"Don't be so nervous," Guy cautioned. "You'll make a mess of it, if you do. You're the one that suggested it, and now you're backing out. What's the matter with you, anyhow?" You seem as though you're going to a funeral. Wake up."

"You don't understand. It's a bad thing to get mixed in with women. She might kill me when she finds out about this."

"Don't worry about that. My sister is as tame as a kitten, and she'll never say a word about it. She's a good sort. Brace up."

"All right. Do you think I'm done up the right way?"

"Wrong would be more correct. You're dressed more like a suitor than a brother. But I guess it'll get by. All right. Get ready. The train is coming. Stand by the exit from the trains, and when I tap you on the shoulder, you're to step back a little, and follow my look. That'll be the one. You see I have her picture, although she hasn't mine."

They waited until the train rolled in, and then lined up by the exit. It was then that Robert warmed up to his task. He waited at the gate with an anxious smile on his lips. Guy was immediately in back of him.

They watched almost all the people leave, and knew that it wasn't the right one till Florence came out. Then Robert walked straight to her and greeted her as his sister Florence. He had forgotten his instructions but he knew by instinct that she was the one.

"Are you sure that you're Mr. Guy Bates?" Florence asked, receiving him coolly.

"Of course I am," Robert said, flashing his card-case with Guy's cards in it. He handed it to her. She read it and then smiled. His heart skipped a few beats, and he put out his arms to her, and she came into them and they kissed. She certainly was pretty, Robert thought; while Guy cursed inwardly, he was then presented as a friend, and they went home.

III

THE three months were passing fastly, as was Robert's heart, but his jealousy was a little softened because Guy's wooing as himself had been succeeding, and no one else had failed to win her affection. He had Florence living in one of the rooms, and every morning, night, whenever he went anywhere, there were farewell kisses, and it seemed a perfectly happy house. He walked around in very fine clothes and brought home to Florence chocolates, and all other such things that girls love.

"Say," one of his friends in the group, once commented, "why do you wear these fancy clothing? Someone would think that you were a-courting and I don't know why you carry home packages every day."

"I am courting the sweetest lady in the world," Robert answered, and walked abruptly in a confectionery store.

When he came out, the friend began questioning, but Robert was deaf to his questions. He soon shook him off, and was on his way home.

"He's become a nut," the friend said to himself, shaking his head.

IV

ARRIVING home, Robert walked on tiptoes to the library, and saw a spectacle. Florence and Guy were in an embrace that seemed to the death. He would have done some killing, if it hadn't been Guy, but even then he felt antagonized. It was getting on his nerves. He walked in abruptly.

They rose when they saw him. They began fiddling and doing other such wonderful phases not unknown to lovers. It made his blood curl.

"Well?" he finally asked, getting red as a lobster.

"T-tell him," Florence urged.

Guy made a few fake starts, and finally blurted out:

"We're engaged to be married. Will you consent?"

Robert almost fell over in a heap. They were engaged; While at the same time, Guy had to press his hand over his mouth to keep from shouting with laughter. Robert began to feel weak, but he held up his courage, and said in a voice that is proper at a funeral:

"Florence, come with me into the garden."

Florence looked back at Guy wistfully, and then they kissed adieu for a little while. At the door, she blew a few kisses to Guy, who did the same. Robert felt like a sinking ship. They left the room, just before Guy exploded into laughter that he couldn't control any longer.

V.

In the garden, Robert had Florence seated before he even essayed to speak a word. When he did speak, he said in a far-away and sad voice:

"Do you love Robert more than me?"

"I don't know," Florence pouted, "but I love him, and much, else I wouldn't consent to become engaged."

"Very well," Robert answered in an honest to goodness heart-broken tone, "I consent, but you'll have to be engaged for a long time.

VI.

The end of the three months had come, and Robert escorted Flo into the garden where the final scene was to be staged. The others were watching in the bushes. After they were seated on the bench, Robert took her hand into his, and kissed it. He then said:

"Florence, I have a confession to make."

"Yes?" she answered in a jesting tone. "Have you committed murder?"

"No, it's not that, it's something else, and concerns you very much. You will hate me hereafter." Flo looked at him amused. He continued: "I am not your brother, Robert is your brother. I was just masquerading."

"Is that what you wanted to confess? Well, you've told me what I know already. I've known it from the first day."

"You have? How did you find out?" he asked bewildered.

"How? well, well. I knew my brother's habits. He always held his left hand in his pocket. I knew again by his hand-writing, because he sent me flowers with notes. Now is it clear?"

"Yes. But if you knew why did you let this go on?"

"Can you ask? The only answer is the true answer. I loved you from the first."

Robert was bewildered but he took her in his arms.

BERNICE

By G. B. Jennings

SHE said, "The world is a glorious place,
I am filled with joy,
I am bubbling over with happiness.
The world is a glorious place."

Ah! that I could be so gladsome,
From one highball.

MARRIED women are interesting. We shouldn't make love to them, we want to make love to them, and they insist upon our making love to them.

EVERY pleasure has its Puritan.

EPISODE IN DURABILITY

By Paul Holcomb

I

TWO women were necessary to my well-being. One of them administered to my body, the other to my mind. Their names were Maria and Daphne.

Maria cooked my meals, washed my linen, cleaned the house and darned the holes in my socks.

Daphne attended to the operations of my soul. She was seductively bewitching, she rouged her lips, sleeked down her black gleaming hair, and wore diaphanous, clinging garments of silk.

The tips of Maria's fingers were roughened by toil.

II

SUDDENLY I was transferred to a desert island.

The two women necessary to my well-being were transferred with me.

Maria, prompted by the instincts of habit, at once went to work. She seized an axe, hewed wood, constructed a cabin which would shield us from the fiercer moods of nature.

Daphne was otherwise occupied. Our departure from civilization had been hurried. Amid the rush and bustle Daphne had mislaid her box of rouge. The desert island echoed with her wails of a lost possession.

We ran out of provisions. We faced starvation. We perceived, on the face of the deep, no token of incoming sail.

We exhausted at length all nourishment which was native to our niche of land. With bleak, hopeless despair we beheld the vision of approaching death.

III

SOMETHING was demanded; something must be done. With characteristic philosophy I deliberated on the problem.

At last, reaching a decision, I rose to my feet.

I approached Daphne, who lay stretched on the ground, studying her face in a crystal pool. As she turned on her side to greet me it was as though the graceful proportions and lines of her body slithered the two-edged blade of remorse into my heart.

I turned to look at Maria, out of whose haggard face starved eyes were watching.

Then I seized Daphne and hung her over the fire, that she might be properly roasted for Maria's supper.

A MAN marries a girl, but he has to live with a woman.

WHEN BILL SMITH REFORMED

By L. M. Hussey

ONE evening Bill Smith was standing in front of a pawnshop window when two girls passed close to him and giggled. Bill turned sharply and stared after them. One of the girls was looking back over her shoulder and it was quite obvious to Bill that this was for his particular benefit. Therefore, without hesitation, he followed and overtook them.

As he came up with the girls he appraised them swiftly and chose the one with the dark red hair. It was she who had smiled back at Bill, and in addition she was, in his eyes, the more desirable. The other was too thin for Bill's taste.

"Hello, girls," said Bill.

"Where did you come from?" asked the red-headed one, laughing.

"Oh, I'm always around . . ."

They then walked together, conversing at random, until finally the red-headed one turned to her thin friend, secretly, and whispered to her. Her object in this brief and private conference was evidently attained when at the next street corner the thin girl said good-night and walked off alone.

"That was good stuff," said Bill. "Now we can get acquainted."

"It's been such a long time since I've seen you," said the girl at Bill's side, "that I've somehow forgotten your name."

Bill accepted this common pretense and informed her.

"But I'm about in the same boat," he said. "I've a poor memory, too. What's your name?"

"Now you want to know too much . . ."

"That doesn't matter. What is it?"

"Well, you can call me Mary . . ."

"All right, Mary. How about taking in a movie?"

Mary turned her full face to Bill, staring at him a second.

"I guess you're all right," she said. "Sure, I'll go to a picture with you."

At this he expressed his satisfaction and they quickened their pace a little. Bill was congratulating himself, for his companion greatly pleased him. She was the sort of girl he admired; she had a straightforward manner, her hair was as pretty as a sunset, her eyes were large and quick; she was the size he found most agreeable. He considered himself lucky to have met her, and incidentally, there was nothing unconventional to him in the manner of their acquaintance, inasmuch as this was the ordinary way young men and young women of Bill's class were made known to each other.

They turned in to the first picture palace and found two seats together. Neither was overwhelmingly carried away by the exploits on the screen, but Mary simulated a greater interest. On the other hand, Bill's first attention was frankly in the girl at his side. He turned a dozen times to observe her dimmed profile that now seemed to gleam white in the dusk, like a night flower.

They were leaning a little toward each other, Bill more out of the perpendicular than Mary, and finally Bill put out his hand and found the softer one of his companion. As his fingers closed over it she approved his intimacy with a slight, quick pressure.

When they went out they walked close together, arm in arm.

"Where shall we go now?" asked Bill.

"Home," said the girl.

"Home? What's the big hurry?"

"Nothing, but we'll go home now. If you're good, I'll let you see me again."

Bill, observing that she was sincere, asked her for her address, and a few moments later they took the street-car.

They were now conversing with great ease and had already confided, each to the other, many details of their private lives. Bill decided that Mary was worth following up and knowing better. On her hand, Mary, learning what Bill's occupation was, and estimating shrewdly about the sum of money he earned at it, determined to encourage him. She was the oldest in the family and home conditions were none too comfortable.

After they reached Mary's street, she permitted her new friend to follow her into the vestibule of her home. For a few minutes they stood there, chatting.

"Well, good night," said Bill at last.

"Good night," she answered.

He put out his hand and the girl took it. Thereupon Bill drew her toward him, put his arm around her and, against a feeble and purely conventional resistance, kissed her.

"Don't forget to come Wednesday, dear," she murmured.

"Of course not, you little queen," he said to her.

They parted again.

Bill stepped in at the bar on the corner and drank four or five glasses of beer in considerable elation. He had made a find; Mary was the real thing.

II

SEVERAL months later, Bill Smith, calling on Mary, found her in unusually bad spirits. She refused to go out anywhere, nor would she have much to say.

As they had now reached a completely affectionate status, Bill attempted to encircle her with his arm, but she drew away and seated herself in a chair.

"What's the matter?" Bill asked, confused.

Mary made no answer. All this was very unwonted behavior for her.

Bill, at a loss for a method of approach, stood in front of her, staring at her—when Mary began to weep!

This was amazing and her tears affected Bill, who had never seen them before, like an avalanche of misery. As a complement of her grief, his own face became distorted and he sank on the floor, beside her chair.

"Tell me . . ." he began.

"Go away from me," came Mary's voice, muffled in her handkerchief. "You're the cause of it all."

"Why . . .!" exclaimed Bill.

Mary raised her face, tragically stained with tears. She leaned toward Bill with her eyes wide and spoke rapidly to him, almost in a whisper.

The news astonished him; he said nothing and sat only and looked at her.

Pausing a second and finding Bill still mute, Mary once more delivered herself over to tears. The sight of her second lachrymal outburst moved Bill to his sense of duty and what was expected of him.

He stood up, bent over Mary and put his arms around her. He brought his face down to Mary's teary cheek.

"You know I think a lot of you, don't you, kid?" he asked.

Mary, sobbing, shook her head.

"Well, I do. There's no use worrying. And . . . and we'll be married any time you say . . ."

Mary slowly raised her head and, like a fountain suddenly cut off, the flow of her tears was miraculously stopped. She put her lips to Bill and kissed him.

"Soon," she said.

So under this urgency Bill and Mary were married within the month. By means of his change of status, Bill was able to get a more favorable remuneration from his employer, so that they took up the business of housekeeping on a basis not particularly less auspi-

cious than any of the other men in Bill's class.

They found at first a certain glamour in being married, and while cloaked in this led a somewhat lyric existence. But at bottom, Mary was not a gentle person nor was Bill one to submit to great restraints. Consequently there developed between them minor clashes, developing through the days to more serious dimensions.

In such an outcome there was nothing unusual. Bill and Mary were not people to long sustain a poetic fiction. Mary quickly found that Bill irritated her, and more specifically she resented the periodic occasions when he went out alone and returned drunk. The matter solely of Bill being drunk, the noumenon, did not disturb her, for to this she was used; her own father had always been drunk and badly, at least once a week. But the money Bill spent angered her, as she had pursuits of her own to which she could have applied it agreeably.

It was Bill's alcoholic predilection that brought about a new condition in their mutual relations.

Bill returned home one Saturday afternoon pleasantly, but not overwhelmingly, drunk. He was in good spirits and he had two or three little beer-store *contes* he desired to tell Mary.

But Mary, angered as usual, had no ear for his wit.

"You're no good," she said. "You're no account at all."

"Listen, kid—"

"You're a good-for-nothing. You drank away your brains years ago."

"But listen—"

Bill put out his hands playfully to take her by the shoulders and administer perhaps a reproving shake, as one might mildly admonish a child.

Like a tempest from a lowering sea, Mary's anger flared. Before Bill touched her she drew back her hand swiftly, released it with a flashing suddenness and struck Bill across the cheek.

On Bill's face the impact of her hand created a scarlet splotch, like the stain of a carmine dye. The tale expired on his lips and, standing a little to one side, the posture into which Mary's thrust had moulded him, he fastened his eyes upon her face, his own physiognomy for the second dumbly inexpressive.

But his immobility was not permanent. On his cheeks the red mark of her blow was covered by a glowing flush of anger.

Bill then did the thing that was in consonance with his genius, the thing Mary anticipated.

Lunging toward her suddenly, a troglodytic avalanche, his large hand closed over Mary's arm. She at once resisted, whereat Bill was thoroughly inflamed. He grasped her furiously with both hands, shook her like a bundle of feathers, blacked one of her eyes, and flung her into a chair.

Bill then stood over her, glowering like a monster.

Mary, limp and beaten, whimpered a moment. Slowly, then, she raised her face, to find Bill's protruding jaw and glaring eyes. She thrust out her arms suddenly, seizing him by the sleeves.

"Bill . . ." she whimpered.

Bill did not soften.

"Bill . . . don't you love me, Bill?"

She stood up and threw her arms about him. Bill resisted a moment—and capitulated. They kissed.

"You better be a good kid," said Bill.

III

Bill's family life had now settled down into what might have been presumed its final and satisfactory settlement. His affairs were certainly more agreeable than they had previously been. Whenever Mary increased too vituperatively, Bill beat her, and so preserved his self-respect among his friends, who employed the same practice.

On Mary's hand, life was also better ordered. She found herself now with an excellent cause for self-pity and she went among her acquaintances com-

plaining of Bill's brutalities. She shed tears with them over their similar misfortunes and had tears shed with her. These things brought out in her a sense of well-being and interest.

And there were the passionately fascinating moments of making up with Bill after each struggle.

Bill, however, for his own good, was drinking a little too heavily. Three or four times a week now he became very alcoholic. This was rather more than he could be expected to stand.

One evening Bill had been wandering about alone, visiting one bar after another, when he was attracted by the sound of singing and the tom-tom of a drum. He gazed in the direction of the noise, but his vision was bleared and he saw nothing save a vague admixture of shifting lights and shadows. However, his curiosity was captured.

Erratically, Bill walked toward the attractive discordance. He presently came into a small crowd of men loafing in a semi-circle about two or three women dressed in Rescue Workers uniforms, and a tall, very spare man, similarly habilimented, all of whom were given over to dissonant song, while a young boy pounded on a gargantuan drum.

The singing ceased and the tall man stepped forward to preach.

About this person Bill found a strange fascination. He was unsmiling, his earnestness was ferocious, almost sinister, his thin arms pumped like bare branches thrown about in a wind. Bill's fogged and misted brain developed a wonder. He found himself irked by an uneasy curiosity. He could not understand this thin man, nor his oppressive seriousness, nor why he so bellowed to the streets. Bill's gaze upon him became fixed, like the dull stare of a wax-works statue. Raucous and unintelligible sounds, issuing like the rasps of many scraped pots from the throat of the thin man filled Bill's ears incessantly.

And suddenly the exhorter had stopped. Some sort of activity was in progress with the brobdingnagian drum. It was rolled out flat in front of the group. Bill heard the jingle of money . . . the crowd was throwing small coins on the drum.

Bill looked again at the thin man. He wondered why he was silent. As he stared at him, the spare and inscrutable face seemed to mist and dissolve as if it were veritably melting into the night. Bill shivered, a strange terror was upon him and he looked down and saw the gleaming and uncertain surface of the big drum.

With a muffled scream, like a crazy diver, Bill flung himself toward the drum. . . .

How many hours later, he did not know, he opened his eyes to a strange smell, a strange room—and the face of the gaunt performer on salvation looking down at him.

"You hear me?" the man asked.

Bill nodded.

"Strong drink just about did for you. The doctor has just left. You'll have to lie here in bed for several days."

"Where am I?" asked Bill.

"You are among friends who will try to save you," the thin man answered. He looked fixedly at Bill, who lay there uneasy under his gaze.

"Tell me," said the thin man, "have you any family?"

"Wife and a child," murmured Bill.

"I must go to them then and tell them that you are safe. Where can I find your unhappy family?"

A thought of rebellion against this person's solemn despotism flashed into Bill's still clouded intellect, to dissolve under the adamant gaze fastened upon him. Bill delivered up the street and number of his residence, and shortly fell to sleep.

Again he awakened and observed that the sun was coming through the window and so judged that the afternoon had set in. He lay quite a period, languid and weak, staring at the ceiling, the bare walls, and the several pieces of furniture in the room. He had closed his eyes again, when he heard the door open.

Bill turned his head and saw the

spare Rescue Worker coming into the room. The man advanced to his bedside and drew up a chair. Once more Bill was fascinated by his long and inscrutable face. An unknown urge, to Bill incomprehensible, motivated the life of this man and supplied him with a sinister power.

"I have been to your home," he said.

Bill made no comment.

"There I heard a sad story . . ."

"What?" Bill asked.

"That question is unnecessary. You understand. I learned from your wife the brutal and inhuman treatment you give her."

He leaned over the sick man, bringing his gaunt face close. Bill suppressed a shiver. He felt that his mind was too weak, too flaccid, to resist the domination that was being exercised upon him.

"Young man," said the salvationist, "have you no ideal of a happy home? Don't you know what it would mean to *you* to give up your brutalities and your vicious practices? Can't you picture your wife waiting for you in the evening, glad instead of shrinking, and proud to have you home?"

"I don't know . . ." murmured Bill.

"I've talked with your wife," the salvationist went on, still leaning close, "and she is breaking her heart over you. I came away determined that this could not go on. I must have a promise from you—a promise of complete reform!"

He bent nearer Bill, the eyes in his tenuous face glowing with excitement, strangely chatoyant. Bill found him impossible to resist and, in his incomprehensible motives, almost terrifying.

"What do you want me to say?" Bill muttered.

"Promise me you'll never touch another drop of the Demon!" he demanded.

"Yes . . ." Bill gasped.

"And never lay your hands again upon your wife!"

"Yes . . ." Bill repeated.

The thin and saturnine oppressor fell then to his knees and terrified Bill further by haranguing the Deity over him for a long period.

IV

BILL SMITH, not yet completely recovered, went home at last with a dazed mind. His faculties had been utterly captivated and ensnared by the domination of the salvationist. A curious fear was in Bill's blood and, for the time, anyway, he regarded the one to whom he had given his promises as a person diabolic and impossible to disobey.

He was indeed an unwell man; he had drunk too much to be good for him. In his sick mind blossomed the flower of a strange idea—no less than the notion of a new sort of domesticity!

Yes, Bill Smith was sentimentalizing. He was beginning to be convicted of his own brutality. He was haunted by misty visions of the first weeks he had known Mary and a delicate romance lay over them like a cloud of scented mist. He was coming to the notion that something of this could be revived and brought back.

He thought of moving pictures he and Mary had seen together where the old couple were still lovers.

In his weakened condition Bill decided that, after all, it was not the thing to beat your wife. He would make amends; he would be kind to Mary.

Mary was not at home when he returned. Bill seated himself in the kitchen and fumbled with the newspaper, waiting. After a time he heard his wife come in at the front.

Bill coughed and shuffled his feet a little. She heard him and came out to the kitchen.

"Well!" she exclaimed.

"Hello," said Bill.

"So you're back, eh?"

"Yes, Mary . . ."

He looked at her from his chair. She was standing in the door, her red hair drawn down over her pale forehead like a band of dull fire. To Bill

she was suddenly feminine and attractive. He forgave her the sternness in her pose, for she knew nothing of his reformation and could only learn by time.

"Back again; Well, I'm sorry!"

"Mary!"

"Certainly I am. Do you imagine I enjoy seeing a good-for-nothing, insignificant booze-fighter like you come back again to muss things up and make it unpleasant, and break up all the little peace and quiet there's been while he was away?"

She glared at him, drew in a breath and loosed again her cascading vituperation. Bill paled. She did not understand. She did not comprehend the change in him. He arose weakly and moved toward her. . . .

Mary paused, shrinking. She knew what was coming. She knew it *would* come, for she was acquainted with Bill's ways. But she felt also a thrill, a burst of excitement. He had stood more than she had expected. . . .

She felt Bill's touch on her shoulder, but a light touch. For Bill was full of explanations; he was endeavoring to get words on his lips that he might acquaint her with the peaceful domesticity they might henceforth enjoy.

Mary looked up quickly. Her gaze came to Bill's face. She stared a second, astonished—there were actually tears in Bill's eyes!

A second more, and she flared suddenly.

"Why!" she exclaimed, "booze *has* done for you! You poor softy! I'll teach you to be a baby!"

Lunging toward him, a troglodytic avalanche, her large hand closed over Bill's arm. He weakly resisted, whereat Mary was thoroughly inflamed. She grasped him furiously with both hands, shook him like a bundle of feathers, blacked one of his eyes, and flung him into a chair. . . .

SONG

By John McClure

YE sober periwinkles,
Ye daisies in the grass,
Ye violet that twinkles
Where'er her white feet pass,
Sweeter than my lady
Never lady was!

Ye gaudy stars of heaven,
Ye butterflies of day,
Ye pale fireflies of even
That light her on her way,
Sweeter than my lady
Was never none, I say!

Dear bygone Dianeme
In whom all graces meet,
Helen with eyes so dreamy,
Blanche with your snow-white feet,
Never lived a lady
Than mine more sweet!

BEING SWEET TO SADIE

By Watkins Eppes Wright

I

"YOU must be sweet to Sadie, Robert, while she is here."

"May I ask who Sadie is?"

"Heavens, Robert! Haven't you heard about Sadie?"

"Nope, for some reason the exciting news has escaped my ears. Enlighten me."

"Well, Sadie is Mrs. Smallwood's cousin. She's coming down for a fortnight. You know, we are all afraid she'll have a rather dull time, since we are all married people here, so each of us has offered to donate a husband to entertain her. We want her to get a nice impression of Ardendale, even if our lives *are* rather uneventful."

"Oh, I see. Sadie is coming down to make fools of us men. Clever!"

"You are wrong; nature has saved her the trouble. But be sensible, Robert, and promise me you'll be sweet to her."

"I'm not sure I know just what you mean by 'sweet,' but I'll gladly join the other benedicks in trying to make her forget time. If some rides in the motor, dances at the clubhouse, and things like that help any, I'm right there to help be 'sweet'! Strikes me that we Ardendalers are getting fat-and-forty too rapidly. We need a little color and effervescence injected into our lives."

"That's dear of you, Robert; but, of course, you needn't rush Sadie too much! Give the other women's husbands a chance. Just see that she has no dragging moments; that's all you're expected to do."

Mr. Forbes-Green arose and pushed his chair back.

"Got to run along now; going 'round the links with Smallwood."

"Very well, but don't stay long. Sadie is coming on the afternoon train and we're all going down to give her a rousing reception at the station."

"Brass-band stuff, I presume."

"And you presume wrong. Just a general greeting by the colony, so everyone can meet her without delay. Run along now and be back for an early lunch."

Mr. Forbes-Green picked up his bag of golf sticks from the corner of the breakfast-room and then walked to his wife's side. He stooped to kiss her, and she turned an indifferent cheek toward his lips. He gave her a sparrow-like peck and walked to the door.

Just before he opened it, Mrs. Forbes-Green called to him.

"Remember, Robert, you promised!"

"Promised what?"

"To be sweet to Sadie."

"Ye gods, woman, one would think this Sadie a reincarnation of Cleopatra to hear you talk," replied Mr. Forbes-Green, and hurried out.

The above conversation, with variations characteristic of the participants, was taking place in about twenty-five homes in Ardendale, as hospitable wives extracted promises from their husbands to be sweet to Sadie.

It began to look as if Sadie was to have the time of her young life, to be completely deluged by attentions from other women's husbands. In fact, if she gave an hour each day to each husband, Father Time would necessarily have to add another to the twenty-four.

Ardendale was a small resort on the coast of Maine. It was one of those

places to which the same families return year after year, increased at various times by a tiny addition to the brood they brought with them. New resorts materialized and deteriorated, but Ardendale went on forever, like Tennyson's brook.

New families seldom came; they sought livelier places. Not that Ardendale wasn't a pleasant enough place to be, but it savored of sameness. If an Impressionist were to paint Ardendale he would call into play colors ranging from pale grays to snuff browns; nothing any more colorful and nothing particularly pronounced. And if, after the painting's completion, you were to look at it through half-closed eyes, the impression you would get would be that of a solid-looking gray pebble-dashed house with brown trimmings.

Robert Allen Forbes-Green (his wife was responsible for the hyphen) was the first man to settle there permanently for the summer months. He later induced a number of his old college chums to come, and thus the place grew. There were practically no young people. Mr. Forbes-Green and twenty-four others in Ardendale chipped in and built the Ardendale Clubhouse, a sort of community meeting place where weekly dances were held. In connection with the clubhouse there was a small eight-hole golf course. Sometimes, when the Ardendalers planned a particularly large event, a number of people from surrounding resorts were asked over. However, this was seldom. The twenty-five families seemed to prefer just themselves, for they didn't have to exert themselves then to be nice. They took each other for granted; if they didn't want to dance they didn't have to; if they didn't want to talk they didn't have to.

The wives usually brought their embroidery or knitting and worked. The husbands either strolled off for pool or smoked and chatted. The dances were often anything but dances. For, after all, there isn't very much fun in dancing with your wife one minute and then merely changing to your chum's wife, who has settled down into a sort of rotund matronage. The chief trouble with Ardendale was that it didn't find any excitement in itself and had become submerged in inanition. It also lacked the initiative to reach out for new blood.

But the Creator had done marvelously by Ardendale. The ground sloped gracefully and very gradually down to the rock-bound coast. Then it ended abruptly. There was a sheer drop over the rugged rocks of about twenty-five or thirty feet. And beginning at the foot of these rocks was a strip of beautiful, sandy beach that permitted surf bathing. Wild roses, gooseberries and innumerable flowers of various shades grew in abandon. Sea gulls in hundreds swooped down and rested upon the graying rocks. Lobster traps bobbed and nodded in the deep green water. Picturesque dorys flecked the horizon at dawn, coming in from the old fishermen's village around the point. The Boston-Portland steamer made a splotch against the blue sky every morning and the smoke from its stacks smeared the blue with two long ribbons of blackish gray. There was something staid and settled about the place, and it may have been this atmosphere of solidity that got into the blood of the Ardendalers and made them somewhat indifferent.

Nothing but an earthquake could loosen these rocks from their firmness, and nothing but an earthquake could awaken the Ardendalers from their lethargy. But the earthquake that would awaken these nice fat-and-forty people would have to wear skirts, have mischievous eyes, and display a shapely ankle!

For Ardendale husbands took Ardendale wives for granted, and Ardendale wives took Ardendale husbands for granted. They drifted into a sort of carelessness. They were not watchful over each other. Why be, so long as there was nothing to worry about? When there are no traps or cats about the mice can afford to become less watchful. Fearing no burglars, we never lock our doors. Thus twenty-five

families lived. Kisses became less burning; embraces less passionate. Affection turned to placid indifference. Ardendale husbands were certainly anything but uxorious. The colony became a sort of beehive of drones.

And into this drab and listless atmosphere came Sadie Sue Sampson!

Have you ever seen a gaily plumed bird swoop gracefully down into a pile of brown leaves and set them to whirling from the force of her wings? That was the effect colorful Sadie had upon the fifty settled and drab humans of Ardendale.

II

As Mrs. Forbes-Green had said, the whole colony turned out to greet Sadie. The crowd gathered about the ornate station in Ardendale looked like a delegation to meet the new pastor or something of the sort. When Sadie stepped off the Pullman something like fifty different varieties of gasps were born on as many lips.

Sadie wore a very short skirt and in stepping down she displayed about fifteen inches of silken-clad limb. And immediately twenty-five men decided that being sweet to Sadie would be a mighty nice occupation, and twenty-five women decided that they had worried themselves unnecessarily—and regretted having extracted twenty-five promises out of as many husbands.

Sadie missed the step and fell forward into the arms of Mr. Forbes-Green. She apologized profusely, but Mrs. Forbes-Green noted that her husband paid little attention to the apologies and that he had seemingly forgotten to remove his arm from about Sadie's waist. Mrs. Smallwood hurried forward to introduce Sadie to everyone, but Sadie was not one to procrastinate, so she sprang upon an express truck and waved her hand hilariously toward the gathering.

"Hello, everybody! God bless you, and come kiss Sadie!"

What followed would make the subway rush hour look like one-thirty a. m. in Pumpkinville.

Sadie kissed them all, regardless of sex or size. And when she had administered the last kiss and straightened up, gasping, she called out:

"Dear married ladies, don't be angry. I kissed your adorable husbands as I would kiss my brothers!"

Followed jolly applause on the part of the males and mirthless laughs on the part of the females. Several women coughed nervously, as if catching the *grippe*. It wasn't the *grippe*, however. And the procession moved on.

To describe Sadie requires but few words. Of course, one might write pages of descriptive matter about her, and yet a few words will suffice. She reminded one of a Christmas package all done up in red ribbons and sprigs of holly. She was a whirl of red lips, rosy cheeks, black hair, graceful figure and vivacity and charm all dolled up in the sauciest frocks imaginable.

And Sadie took Ardendale by storm. She was the queen subjugation of everything in sight. She hugged the children of the twenty-five families to her bosom and loved them up; she slapped the husbands on the back in an I'm-your-pal fashion, and then kissed the wives and admired their clothes and homes.

Sadie was impartiality personified. You simply couldn't talk about her; there was nothing tangible to which you might lay hold. If she did muss up your husband's hair, didn't she also pet your favorite offspring and compliment your latest party frock? So there you are! She was the kind of girl that did everything in the most innocent manner imaginable. If she was indiscreet you hardly dared say anything; if she didn't know things were wicked, why tell her, and put ugly little ideas in her brain? If she swore, which Sadie sometimes did, you found yourself saying, "Isn't she cute?" when your conscience told you that you should throw up your hands in holy horror and cry, "Heavens, Sadie, you're awful!" Such was Sadie Sue Sampson.

As the days passed and Sadie found herself guest of honor from morning

until morning, Ardendale took on a pale pink sort of gaiety which threatened to become a bright red! At any rate, twenty-five women began to sit up and take notice.

Husbands who had come and gone with all the freedom of the world suddenly found themselves being severely cross-questioned every time they came in a few minutes late. And when the wives of Ardendale became suspicious and inclined to be garrulous, husbands began to be cautious, and frequently wore that expression seen on the face of a child who has been sampling the jam jar. And therefore every wife became a sort of German spy on her husband.

Other things happened. For instance, husbands who had worn the same tie seven days began changing seven times a day. Wives who sat around home in negligée either reading or embroidering suddenly appeared in charming morning and afternoon frocks, while books went unread and embroidery hoops settled down to decay.

The surf seemed to boom upon the rocks with renewed vigor; the gooseberries simply gooseberried all over the place, and wild roses ran riot, while the summer days laughed themselves sore across their middles with the sheer joy of living.

And Sadie Sue Sampson, the cause of it all, danced her way innocently over the palpitating hearts of the men and the uneasy breasts of the women.

The following conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Forbes-Green, with slight variations, was being duplicated a half dozen times a day in the homes of Ardendale.

Mr. Forbes-Green had just come in and tossed his motoring gloves and top coat over a chair.

Mrs. Forbes-Green glided in through a French window from the veranda and joined him.

"Where have you been, *my dear?*"

Mr. Forbes-Green, somewhat surprised at the affectionate emphasis on the last two words of his wife's question, eyed her suspiciously.

"Motoring, *my dear!*"

"Wasn't it awfully lonely motoring alone, Robert?"

"Not particularly—and besides I picked up company."

"Why didn't you ask me to go with you? I adore motoring in the morning—especially when everything is fresh and clean."

"If that's the case, you certainly have changed materially."

"What do you mean?"

"Just this: Two weeks ago you refused three times to ride with me before breakfast—and even before lunch."

Mrs. Forbes-Green hurriedly turned her attention to a fern and pretended to ignore this remark as she broke off a perfectly good sprig.

"Who was your company—the company you said you picked up?"

"Say, Daisy, you have gotten into the habit of asking the most darn-fool questions about the most insignificant matters of late. What has come over you, anyway?"

"If the matter is so insignificant, Robert, why do you beat about the bush to keep from answering?"

Mr. Forbes-Green savagely bit the end off a cigar and glared at the unoffending thing as if it were a smallpox germ.

Mrs. Forbes-Green frowned and tapped her fingers together nervously.

Finally she exploded.

"Robert, where have you been, and what *have* you been doing?"

"Well, if you *must* know, I've been being sweet to Sadie," her spouse replied, and strode angrily from the room.

With a quivering sigh and a dramatic clutch at her breast that would have made Nazimova green with envy, Mrs. Forbes-Green sank into a chair.

III

And so this glimpse into the Forbes-Green domicile was but a glimpse into the whole private life of Ardendale. And while these petty family rows were being enacted with more or less vim,

according to the participants, Sadie Sue Sampson, in a striking black and white bathing-suit, was making her way cautiously down the path over the rocks to the beach.

She was alone and she was humming a new rag. To say that Sadie was having a nice time in Ardendale would be putting it much too mildly. She was having a wonderful time. Such adorable husbands these Ardendale women possessed! Sadie chuckled for some reason, and then slipped, rolled over a couple of times, and landed in a sitting position on the sands below.

At exactly the same moment, as if prearranged, a young man appeared around the jutting rocks and stood staring at Sadie. He was tall, attractively slender, sunburned and very, very blond. His wavy hair blew about in the wind. He wore an abbreviated bathing-suit with a white canvas belt. He watched Sadie, whose back was toward him, for some moments, as if he thought he recognized her, but was not quite sure.

Then Sadie laughed in a very carefree sort of manner, and as this laugh was brought to the young man upon the accommodating wind's waves, he began to grin.

He straightened up with a jerk and ran hurriedly toward Sadie. He stopped directly in front of her and folded his arms, looking down upon her bowed head.

"Enter Heroine—head first!" he exclaimed.

Sadie looked up with a start and then gasped.

"Jack! For Heaven's sake, where did you come from?"

"From out of the sea, like the masculine for mermaid."

Sadie grew serious. Jack, as Sadie had called him, dropped down cross-legged beside her.

"Why are you here, Jack? You shouldn't have come."

"I had to see you. I'm staying over at Fishermen's Rocks. A nice old fisherman brought me over in his dory. I wanted to surprise you—and wore my bathing-suit so we could have a swim. I promise not to bother you more than once a week. You aren't angry, are you?"

"No," pouted Sadie. Then, suddenly: "Shall we have the swim now?"

"Sure. But tell me about Ardendale. How is everything going?"

"Great! The men are susceptible—the women suspicious. I'm under the surveillance of twenty-five women who call me 'dear' and mean 'cat'!"

And then they dashed into the surf hand in hand.

They dived through the great frothy breakers and came to the surface some distance away.

Side by side they struck out to sea, using the graceful Australian crawl. When they had reached a point where their heads looked like black specks they turned and swam back, swinging over on their backs now and then to float in with the tide.

Reaching the beach, they dropped down breathlessly on the sand and faced each other. For some reason the situation slipped into silent awkwardness.

"Well?" This from Jack.

"Well—what?" This from Sadie.

"You know what I mean, Sadie. When are you going to marry me?"

"Heavens, there you go! I left New York so you'd work and forget to ask me that question—and here you chase me all the way to Maine just to ask it again."

"Please answer, Sadie. I'm getting on splendidly with my work. There's no need postponing things any longer. Again, I ask, when?"

Sadie gazed out over the breakers, where the sea gulls dipped and rose like wind-tossed paper.

Suddenly she turned and looked Jack directly in the eyes.

"Are you sure you love me, Jack?"

"As sure as I am that the sky above is blue—that the sea is forever restless—that those birds out there are gulls. Is that enough?"

"Quite—for even doubtful me!"

"Why did you ask that foolish question so seriously?"

"Because since I've been in Ardendale I've taken note of a lot of things. It would break my heart if I looked upon you, in the years to come, as a piece of household furniture, and to have you look on me as a mere something that you had to have hanging around like—like—the poker!"

"Good Lord, Sadie! What's the matter with you? I'm afraid those Ardendale wives have affected you as seriously as you have them. Wake up, forget such foolish ideas, and—when are you going to marry me?"

"It's hard to tell, but I'll decide very suddenly. You may receive a note from me any day telling you I'm ready. And when you get the note, drop everything else and come—before I change my mind. Will you?"

"Will I? Just try me!"

"Jack, you're a dear, and I sometimes wonder if you will ever get over being a kid. Now you must go. I've a date with six husbands. Run along like a good boy."

"And when can I see you again?"

"Oh, that depends—you'll know—just trust Sadie!"

"May I kiss you goodbye?"

"Certainly—delighted. But in the shadow of the rocks. Not out here in the sunlight!"

And so in the shadow of the old rocks they kissed and parted.

IV

ARDENDALE'S gay entertaining of Sadie turned from a pale pink to a deep old rose, and then into a brilliant sunset red. The final function that climaxed her memorable visit was a dance at the clubhouse. Several outsiders had been asked over from nearby resorts, so that "Sadie could meet some young men who were single."

Never before had the staid clubhouse walls echoed with such gaiety. Most of the gaiety was spontaneous, but a great deal of it was forced. The dance, however, was nothing less than an epoch in Ardendale history. It surpassed being a Red Letter Day and became an Illustrated Poster Day. No one would ever forget it.

Wives who had always brought embroidery or books with them, dressing indifferently, appeared in the latest modes; they were rouged, penciled and padded; they bloomed like orchids.

Wives who had once preferred sewing and reading to dancing with husbands they accused of being awkwardness personified, suddenly became wild with desire to dance with the same husbands.

Husbands who had worn sport clothes, or just whatever they happened to have on, appeared in evening dress.

Husbands who had slipped off for pool or a smoke, to avoid dancing, now clamored for dances. And in the midst of this gay setting, against this colorful background, Sadie Sue Sampson stood out like a wonderful hollyhock in a garden of unpretentious old-fashioned blossoms. Her dance frock was of crimson chiffon over satin, and at her breast was pinned a bunch of crimson rambler roses. Her dress was simplicity itself and the flowers she had gathered from the Smallwood yard.

There was nothing extravagant about Sadie. But she was the sort of girl that could wear a shabby dress and make people think it was the latest thing from the most exclusive shop on the Avenue. Her black hair was combed back smoothly, turned under to give a bobbed effect, and held down by a narrow crimson ribbon tied tightly about her forehead. Her cheeks vied with the crimson of her dress, and her eyes made sparkling jewels ashamed of themselves.

An orchestra had been imported from Old Orchard Beach, and as it had played on the Pier for people in all stages of intoxication, it ran to the raggediest rags. A cripple could hardly have resisted the hilarity this orchestra managed to weave into its playing. And it affected none quite so wholly as it did Sadie. She danced with graceful, almost sensuous, abandon. This but in-

creased the surveillance of the wives. If their looks had been bullets from machine guns poor Sadie would have resembled a colander. And the dance progressed with hilarity that threatened to become boisterous before the midnight hour.

Mrs. Smallwood and Mrs. Forbes-Green, not having a dance, found themselves somewhat isolated, and dropped down on a wide window seat. However, they were able to get a good view of the whole room beyond, and while they talked with their lips, they watched with their eyes, not letting a thing escape their hawk-like scrutiny. It was a break dance and Sadie hardly got around the room before someone broke in and she was whirled away by another man. Certainly there was none of the wallflower about Sadie.

"Do you know, my dear, I think we worried unnecessarily about Sadie—I mean about her being bored here in Ardendale," Mrs. Forbes-Green remarked.

"Yes, I think so myself. Sadie is the kind of girl who has a good time anywhere. If she was cast on a cannibal island she would doubtless have all the cannibals doing the fox-trot with her in five minutes. Sadie demands a good time of the world," Mrs. Smallwood offered.

"And I might say that the world shows no reluctance in giving it."

"I sometimes think if Sadie's feet changed places with her head she would be more sensible."

This conversation that slowly cut Sadie into pieces and rubbed salt into the wounds was brought to a sudden termination by the appearance of Sadie herself on the arm of Mr. Smallwood.

They dropped down on the window seat by the two women who had taken it upon themselves to diagnose Sadie's personality.

Sadie fanned and kept up a chatter that meant nothing, but which you wanted to listen to just the same. It wasn't so much what Sadie said, but it was the cutie way she said it that counted.

Mrs. Forbes-Green looked on in polite silence, only smiling now and then, pretending to be amused at some of Sadie's remarks.

But while she smiled, or rather while her lips tilted slightly at the corners, her eyes reflected no mirth. She was thinking. So far Mr. Forbes-Green had not danced with Sadie, and Mrs. Forbes-Green knew it would come sooner or later. Robert was not the man to miss *his!* The orchestra began playing the Blue Danube Waltz and Mrs. Forbes-Green gritted her teeth. That silly waltz was too sentimental for words. She certainly hoped Robert wouldn't—

Her thoughts were interrupted by the arrival of Robert himself. He boldly marched up and claimed Sadie for the dance. As they floated away, Mrs. Forbes-Green bit her underlip until it became a deep purple. It wasn't necessary for Robert to hold Sadie that close. And how she hated that new way the girls had of putting their arms way up around the neck of their partners! It was ugly—nothing less than downright vulgar. And Sadie's dress, light and airy, floated out every time she turned, revealing a lot of crimson-clad limb that even Mrs. Forbes-Green was forced to acknowledge shapely.

Mr. Smallwood, who had remained by his wife, leaned forward with elbow on his knee and chin in palm, watching Sadie dreamily. He smiled as if pleased with the sight. Mrs. Smallwood watched him with her beady eyes aglitter. She glanced at Sadie and then back at her husband. She clenched her fists at her sides and tried to contain herself. It was useless, and she popped off like a steam valve.

"If Sadie wasn't my mother's sister's child, I'd say she was a—a—cat!"

With this she stormed out of the room like a badly peeved whirlwind, leaving Mr. Smallwood gazing after her with a ludicrous expression of astonishment on his face.

"Humph!" he snorted, and followed his wife.

Left alone, Mrs. Forbes-Green let her uneasy eyes follow her husband and the

girl in the case as they circled around and around the room.

She noted that Mr. Forbes-Green allowed no breaking in on *his* dance.

And as Mrs. Forbes-Green gradually absorbed numerous annoying details that might pass unnoticed at other times she began to boil so noticeably inside that she tore herself from the room where such a disgusting scene was being enacted. She found a secluded bench on the far end of the clubhouse porch, away from the big room where the dance was in progress. Here she sought solace with the night. With elbows on the railing and fingers jammed in her ears to keep from hearing the hateful music, she gazed up into the heavens, as if boring their heights in search of a much-desired sympathy.

How long she sat there she was unable to say. But suddenly a man in long coat, goggles and soft hat appeared from behind some shrubbery. He placed his fingers to his lips and whistled softly but clearly.

Mrs. Forbes-Green forgot to keep her ears stopped now; something interesting was about to happen. She needed all her senses and more too. Nothing must escape her.

A girl in a long cloak and scarf darted from around the corner of the clubhouse and ran to the man. As she ran Mrs. Forbes-Green was able to get flashing glimpses of a pair of crimson ankles. The man took the girl's hands in his and drew her to him as if to kiss her. The girl said something very softly and the man nodded. Together they ran down the drive and hopped into a car that was standing in the main road, purring softly, ready to dash away at the slightest touch of a human hand.

The man bent over the wheel and the car jumped forward like an animal that had been struck sharply with a whip, and, gathering speed, it glided down the road.

As the tail lights melted away in the distance, Mrs. Forbes-Green could swear they twinkled wickedly and were saying, "We're eloping!" She was paralyzed! Completely stunned! Frozen in her seat!

Then with a smothered scream she bounded over the porch railing with all the agility of a basket-ball girl and ran around the house.

She dashed breathlessly into the garage back of the clubhouse and gave every car a thorough examination. Finally she found what she wanted and sighed with relief. Her husband's car was safe!

Breathing more easily, yet still clutching at her heart with excited fingers, Mrs. Forbes-Green hurried into the clubhouse and grabbed Mrs. Smallwood's arm.

Dragging her to one side she whispered hoarsely, her voice a-quiver with excitement:

"Sadie's eloped with a man!"

Mrs. Smallwood emitted a little shrill scream that sounded like a traffic cop's whistle and clutched Mrs. Forbes-Green's arm convulsively, as she looked wildly about her.

"Where's Mr. Smallwood? Was it him?"

But just then Mr. Smallwood joined them, and was told about Sadie.

The news spread like wildfire, and before its onrush each Ardendale wife melted away to locate her husband. When a husband for every wife had been found things settled down into a state somewhat resembling calm. Every man was accounted for, even the men from other resorts, and yet Sadie had gone with one. Who was the man? While twenty-five husbands felt a keen sense of disappointment that the dance should end so disastrously, the same number of wives drew a deep breath of relief. It was as if a great weight had suddenly taken flight from its roosting place upon their shoulders and left them pleasantly relaxed.

After a conference to discuss what was best to do, it was unanimously decided that Sadie was perfectly able to take care of herself; that she would either write them or come back. And so the Ardendalers wended their way home. The dance had been a blooming

success up to a certain point, but a wilting failure when the guest of honor had run away.

Although Mrs. Forbes-Green wanted to sing, dance, whistle, scream or even yell with relief, she forced herself to sit calmly by her husband and not say a word.

On reaching their domicile they inserted the latch key and entered the hall, still in silence.

Mr. Forbes-Green switched on the light, and without a word walked into his den. There, lighting one of his favorite cigars, he slouched into a big chair, and blew smoke rings ceilingward.

Mrs. Forbes-Green stood in the hall drawing off her gloves and trying to decide whether to go on up to bed or kiss her husband. As she turned to glance at herself in the mirror, something lying on the floor, as if having been pushed under the door, attracted her attention.

She pounced upon it, not having altogether thrown off her mantle of suspicion, and found it to be a note addressed to her in a feminine handwriting.

She tore it open feverishly and began reading.

She gasped and sat down very suddenly. This is what met her eyes:

"Dear Lady: A note like this goes under the front doors of all you dear hostesses. Am leaving them as I go down the road to Romance with the only man I could ever love. Listen to me, please. I came to Ardendale with a purpose: to make each of you appreciate your adorable husband. I knew that when another woman seemed to be trying to get him away from you, you'd realize his worth. I've succeeded beyond my wildest hopes. Now, dear lady, go put your arms about the man you promised to love, honor, and obey, and make *him* realize he has a human being for a wife—not a wax model who slouches about until another woman comes along and shows her how very desirable her husband really is. I can only say that I trust you will love your husband as I shall love mine.

Affectionately,

SADIE."

Mrs. Forbes-Green allowed several half-audible gasps to escape her lips before she got up. She looked at the note a moment as if undecided what to do with it. Then, smiling very, very wisely, she stuffed it in her bosom and tipped to the door of the den.

There she stood with shining eyes and watched the smoke rings from her husband's cigar sail upward, distort themselves, and melt away.

She then stole softly across the room and seated herself on the arm of Mr. Forbes-Green's chair. He looked up somewhat surprised and then quite naturally slipped his arm about her waist. Mrs. Forbes-Green nestled down a little closer and with one finger began arranging and re-arranging the thin patch of hair on her husband's pate.

Thus they sat for some moments, as if lost in deep thought.

Mrs. Forbes-Green spoke first.

"I really feel as if I should thank you, dear."

"For what, honey?" queried Mr. Forbes-Green, a little puzzled.

"For being sweet to Sadie," Mrs. Forbes-Green replied, dreamily.

THE day he marries, a man grows seven years older, and his wife seven years younger.

WOMEN are like birds: it takes only a crumb or two of love to make them sing.

FAUX PAS

By Hilary Pitts

I have been discharged.

* * *

I am a butler.

Yesterday I was told to dust the drawing-room.

The thought of how absurd I should appear with a little feather duster in my hand so unnerved me that, on the sly, I emptied the tall decanter in the dining-room.

I entered the drawing-room, gingerly touching my little duster to the frail bric-a-brac.

I came upon a piece of sculpture.

It was the statue of the most beautiful woman I had ever seen.

The face was exquisitely chiselled and the shoulders were daintily rounded and the limbs were long and slender.

I stood enrapt before it.

"James!" came the reproving voice of my mistress, "Continue dusting."

I hastily touched my little duster to the delicate face of the statue.

* * *

I have been discharged.

The beautiful lady was not a statue.

When I touched my little duster to her face, she sneezed.

UNDERSTANDING

By Grace G. Bostwick

THOUGHT that age was dull and gray.
Without a thread of rose or gold
To weave a bit of pattern gay
In its grim fold.

I thought the valley of the years
Was like a prison door-yard bare;
No beam of sunlight through its fears
Might enter there.

But now I stand upon the height
Of age supreme that few attain,
The whole world glows with such glad light
That sight is pain!

THE UNSENTIMENTALISTS

By L. Bricconcella

HAD they been less evidently preoccupied with their propagandas, Mary Marshall and her assistant, William Jones, might both have paused to wonder at the uniformity of their temperaments and the chance which had brought two such eminently congenial personalities together.

There was, as a matter of truth, nothing marvelous in the mere physical facts of their first introduction. Jones had in quite the ordinary manner applied for a position with Mary Marshall and she had employed him. The singularity of this event lay simply in the chance that it should have been Jones, her very intellectual and emotional complement.

By the time Jones came out of college and began the business of earning a living, Mary had already assumed the editorial guide-ropes of the *Unsentimental Review*. Jones on his part took up the labors of a music critic. He had something of a singing voice, too, and proposed to develop it and in time give up criticism for performance. Had this original plan worked itself out, it is scarcely likely to suppose that Mary Marshall and William Jones would have ever even casually met each other.

But Jones was a pronounced unsentimentalist and the stuff he was called upon to criticise tried him severely. It would be difficult to trace the growth of his unsentimentality—if it really had any growth. Very probably it was the gift of Jones' birth. At any rate, this characteristic of his temperament rendered his critical labors highly uncongenial. His assignments frequently involved the journalistic reporting of the operas, but not the new first-presented operas nor the big revivals. For the most part he was subjected to an apparently unlimited list of *Trovatores, Lucias, Carmens, Manons, Lohengrins, Tristan und Isoldes*—and he sincerely detested them all and individually.

"The same old formula," Jones would mutter bitterly under his breath, as he arrived somewhere near the close of the second act. "A mob of asses on the stage endlessly making love to each other and wailing about it and sticking each other in the back about it and the Lord knows what!"

But Jones was quite aware that his paper would reduce any heretical remarks in general on Verdi and Bizet and Wagner and the rest of them to a point of extreme exiguity, wherefore he exuded his critical spleen upon the vocalists engaged, confidentially telling his readers that Caruso's manner rendered him excessively bilious, that Matzenauer's upper register resembled the violent moments of straight-jacket hysteria, that Jacques Urlus had the stage presence of a butcher—until presently there was a little side-door managerial remonstrance and Jones lost his job.

But to him this was neither shock nor surprise, for he had definitely determined on an early resignation anyway. He entered a business college at once, mastered the typewriter and stenography in a month and cast about him for some suitably unsentimental occupation as a private secretary or something of the sort.

In this connection he had some difficulty. Remunerative situations did not appear to stalk the streets in search of him and Jones began the personal round of many places, likely and un-

likely. It was in this quite casual and job-hunting fashion that he came into the editorial lair of the *Unsentimental Review*. He was fortunate enough to interview Mary herself.

"I'd like to have work with you folks," he told her, "where I'd have a little opportunity to do some writing myself."

"You have any experience?" she asked him.

He told her of his former employment.

"You don't have to part with a cent until you see what I can do," he said to her.

She liked his manner and what was more, needed an assistant who could take a certain amount of dictation. She employed him with the proviso that she *would* discharge him at once if he were not entirely satisfactory.

But Jones soon demonstrated his abilities with such congenial work as was permitted him with the *Review*. It was he, for instance, who worked up the special article entitled "Anti-Mush in Advertising," which caused Campbell's Soup to at once withdraw their half-page per month from the *Review*, but on the other hand occasioned G. B. Shaw to instruct Brentano's that his literary products be fully advertised in that journal. He was also responsible for the brilliantly illuminating attack on the practice of hand-shaking, which even among friends, the writer declared, was a rite not only needlessly sentimental, but positively prejudicial to the health.

"Owing to the great prevalence of piano-technique," Jones wrote, "a larger percentage of hand-shakers have an extraordinary development of the abductor minimi digiti manus and the other manual muscles. Consequently the hand is for the most part subjected to a vicious grinding and vise-like oppression, with the result that the first row of the phalanges is often permanently dislocated from its articulations with the metacarpal heads. In addition, there is the occasion of excessive bacterial transference and the subsequent fraternization of strange germs cannot be recommended in the cause of public hygiene."

This piece in particular attained such a popularity that a reprint in pamphlet form was discovered advisable and indeed in the end a soft leather-backed, limited edition de luxe, autographed by the author, was presented by the Roycrofters. The article was in fact the direct cause of the attacks afterwards directed against hand-shaking from the Ethical Culture Society, and was the immediate agent responsible for the formation of the League for Salutation by Nose-rubbing.

Also it was the publication of the same philippic that demonstrated to Mary the unusual worth of her collaborator.

When it was finally determined that the piece should go to press as a pamphlet, she shook him vigorously by the hand.

"You've given us a winner," she said.

"I hope so."

"If we keep on this way we'll make a different place out of this country in a year.

He assented vigorously.

"No question of that. All that is necessary is sufficient scientific unsentimental suggestion. . . . Give the people a set of rules . . . "

"And then see that they live by them."

"Exactly . . . "

This marked the initiation of their closer literary association. Mary made it a custom now to go over the points of her articles with Jones before working them up, and Jones consulted her in a reciprocal manner. In this way they were frequently of considerable assistance to each other, particularly in those instances where a thought in the nascent state in one mind was caught up into a sudden resonance and development in a second brain. They arranged their desks, for the purpose of facilitating consultation, in juxtaposition and all through the months of the autumn and winter Jones worked beside Mary six days out of every week and

on an average of eight or nine hours each day.

He never had had quite so much the sense of good fortune as during this term of six or seven months. His work he discovered was wholly in harmony with his temperament. He wrote what he believed, it was not necessary for him to simulate enthusiasm—there was none of the mangonism that had soured his previous writing endeavours.

He admired, too, his female chief, strictly of course for her sapience and intellectual penetration. Not a sentimental thought crossed his consciousness in connection with her. Had you asked him at this period the color of her eyes he would first have been surprised at the irrelevancy of the query and would, second, have been utterly unable to satisfy your curiosity. In the same manner, had the question been put to him, he would have referred to her hair as yellow, and would have made use of no metaphorical descriptives of any character.

The first rift in Jones' silver-lined complacency made itself apparent in the early burgeoning months of the Spring.

Jones thought at first he was a trifle overworked and run down—although he could scarcely see how such a condition had come about—and consequently he purchased a bottle of Compound Syrup of the Hypophosphites and administered it to himself thrice daily as a tonic. But the medical excellences of this nostrum did not remove his indefinate sensation of mental and bodily discomfort. He made out his trouble to be a vague synthesis of languor and discontent, but could not by any means imagine why he should suffer from either of these elements.

A friend to whom he confided his annoyance assured him that his symptoms were unquestionably commonplace and resulted simply from the change of season.

"You take a good brisk walk every evening," this informant advised him. "That'll get the winter cobwebs out of your blood."

To Jones there appeared a considerable degree of the reasonable in this advice and he concluded to at least *try* the cure peripatetic.

On the first evening he trudged as far as the park and found himself not at all accustomed to pedestrianism and foot-tired. He selected a bench and seated himself with a very definite relief. It was rather luxurious, he found, to sit quietly and watch the crowds. Analysis presented these mostly in units of two, a man and a woman. Some of these couples made among themselves unabashed demonstrations of amativeness. Jones agreed with his judgment that these exhibitions were in the least estimate superlatively silly.

He perceived himself interested in a very young girl seated diagonally opposite him. She was alone and appeared to be thoughtfully observing the sky. He noticed that she wore a yellow dress, low in the neck and matched with partly visible yellow stockings and low shoes, and that she looked very cool. It occurred to Jones that in a fanciful poetical manner she resembled a flower. He toyed a moment with this notion and rejected, it suddenly with anger. What an utterly fatuous sentimentality! She was an immature female of the genus homo—how could she be a flower? It was one of those absurd ineptitudes into which a tired brain will wander. He decided that his brain was in fact quite tired.

It must be, he thought, the work. Not that the hours were at all exceptional but that the whole thing was for the most part mental labor. Perhaps he could arrange for an early vacation. An early vacation was really necessary for it was quite useless to expect an actually tired brain to respond scintillantly to requirements.

He looked at the girl and the idea occurred to him to talk to her. But a consummation of this notion would demand that he walk over to her bench, which of course he could not do as he had no acquaintance with her.

Also, she could not be anything over sixteen.

He wondered what she would talk about or even what he would talk about.

These youthful maidens could not be expected to have any great conversational power.

None the less, it might be interesting to talk to her.

Perhaps, Jones mused, she would not consider it so unconventional if he did cross over to her bench—there is a reasonable way of doing these things. Conventions in fact were extremely stupid barriers when they thrust themselves between a man and his entirely unsentimental wish to make conversation with another human being.

He rested his thoughts for several moments on this aspect. Perhaps there was material for a very successful article here — an attack on sentimental conventions.

An entirely irrelevant idea obtruded itself. The young girl was pretty. Jones was on the point of corroborating this appraisement when he hesitated and slightly shook his head. It was the brink of dangerous ground. Was it in strict accordance with a severely unsentimental habit of thought to use such a terminology as pretty? At any rate she had an agreeable conformation of features. One could venture this safely.

He was distracted from his meditative uncertainties by a young fellow, a cigarette between his lips, inquiring for a match. Jones did not smoke and never carried matches and he told the young man that he had none. The lad, with his cigarette still unlit, resumed his walk and Jones saw him pass slowly by the young girl's bench. He was surprised to witness the youth retrace a few of his steps and seat himself on her particular bench, beside her. He expected to observe an indignant protest, but there was none. He watched them converse a few minutes and then they both arose. The girl in the yellow dress put her arm through that of her new acquaintance and they walked off together.

Jones recognized an unaccountable and wholly irritating sense of loss. He remained seated himself only a short period longer and then he arose and sought a street car. He felt even worse than he had before he commenced his stroll. There certainly could be very little in the walking cure. The picture of the yellow-dressed girl, with her arm linked in the youth's, returned to disturb him more than once during the night.

He did not sleep at all well. For some not entirely evident reason he perceived a growing regret in his consciousness that he had not knocked the offensive and unlighted cigarette out of the fellow's undesirable mouth. He was certainly too young to smoke cigarettes, anyhow. Altogether, Jones did not gather much more than two hours of actual slumber out of the whole long night.

Mary noticed his heavy lids the next morning.

"You must have been out late," she said.

"I was in bed by ten o'clock," he told her.

"You had too much sleep then."

"I didn't have any sleep at all."

"Why not?"

"I don't know why . . . "

She paused, a trifle surprised at this reply. It was not precisely of the order she had reason to expect. Jones usually presented a front of great intellectual clearness. His habit was never to be in any way muddled nor afflicted with the numerous fatuities of the sensation panderers. She was, however, feeling, singularly, a little out of sorts herself and she did not find it in her humor to press him to the point of a greater definiteness.

Jones at any rate offered no sort of additional explication, but seated himself at his desk and raised his typewriter from the well and inserted a sheet of paper. He had commenced an article the afternoon before assailing the growing nuisance of philandering in the city parks. He had not progressed far then and had torn up the completed

sheets before closing his desk for the day.

Now he stared at the keys of his typewriter, fiddled with the space-bar and wrote nothing.

Peculiarly, he could not bring himself sufficiently into sympathy with the righteousness of his topic. When he had conceived it, it had seemed an admirable subject for one of the minor editorial disquisitories.

Mary interrupted his aimless key-staring.

"I'm beginning the osculation article," she said.

"Yes . . . ?"

"You've read up on the bacteria business better than I. What are the organisms anyway?"

He rubbed his hand wearily over his forehead and through his hair before replying.

"*Staphylococcus pyogenes,* chiefly," he said.

"But that's more or less generic."

"Well, specifically, *albus* and *aureus.*"

For a moment the unshriven notion presented itself that sweating over labial flora was carrying the plausible to an extreme humectation. He decapitated this thought rather savagely and at the same time observed his chief sigh heavily.

"I can't seem to whip this thing into shape," she said. "I've attempted two or three beginnings and put them all in the basket."

"It's the weather," he said.

"The weather . . . ?"

"Yes, I've felt queer on my part for nearly a month now. I believe you feel like I do."

"But how *do* you feel?"

He was on the point of giving this an answer when he paused with his mouth opened and looked intently at her. He perceived suddenly a relation between Mary, his unsentimental co-worker, and his sensations of the past few weeks. She appealed to him at the moment as something feminine. He was somewhat frightened at this discovery and inclined to retract its admission, but found he could not do so. Moreover, he discovered himself impelled into strange desires. They were not even possessed of a definite formulation, yet he arose from his stool and approached the other desk, looking steadily at the seated woman. He saw her eyes grow it seemed considerably in size and he was sure that she inhaled a little breath and held it. He reached her side and stood just a moment irresolute. Then what exactly was his desire came to him.

Bending down to her he kissed her.

There was only a second of silence when he stood erect again. She seized him enthusiastically by the arm.

"Jones!" she exclaimed. "That was an inspiration. It was just the vivifying touch I required. Now I can write my article. Without it I might have been mooning around all day."

She pointed to his desk.

"Won't you sit down and help me?" she asked. "If you'll take my dictation I can put the thing through in no time . . . the greatest anti-kiss article we ever sent to press."

Jones caught a measure of her enthusiasm. He perceived indeed that there had been lifted from him his burden of oppression. Perhaps there was a belated virtue in hypophosphites after all. He felt a surge of scientific transport and searched in his desk for a stenographer's note-book.

"Ready . . ." he said, presently

"When," began Mary, "the labial surfaces appropinquate and finally achieve an approximation, there is an immediate and deadly intermingling of the mutual bacterial floras. . . ."

Jones nodded his head with approval. They worked without intermission for more than an hour.

"Fine," announced Jones, as he set down the final characters. "It should make quite a stir and cut down any amount of this sentimental osculation evil."

"I believe so," she agreed.

And then she raised her head and quite as a matter of course, he stooped to kiss her . . .

AND SO IT GOES—

By Ford Douglas

THE Hon. Eska P. Eutskra rolled over in bed and then raising himself on his elbow, glanced out of the window. Through the clear slab of ice he could see that the Arctic sun was hours high, and he guessed it to be about four in the morning. Then dropping back on his couch, he tucked his reindeer robe closely about his chin and gave himself up to pleasurable thoughts for the day.

There was nothing to do. The hunting season was over and now he could loaf through the winter. The gods had indeed been kind to Eska. For under the bed was a ton or more of succulent whale blubber; half the carcass of a musk ox lay under his pillow, and somewhere in the igloo he knew there was a box of candles. He was rich.

Nothing to do! Not even the dogs to feed, for his brother-in-law had borrowed them for a month's visit with some relatives. And now he could lay on the flat of his back and watch his wife scrape a fragrant walrus hide for weeks on end, if he was of a mind to. As these thoughts came lazily to him he smiled and thanked the seven sacred totems of Svitska.

He was content—at peace with all the world. It was such luxury to lie abed and dream thus of his good fortune, and he closed his eyes, half-consciously enjoying the savory odor of a mess of salmon entrails, *kasuch,* that his wife was cooking over an oil lamp.

Mrs. Eutskra should have been a happy woman. She had everything. Her husband, of an old and distinguished Esquimau family, was a good provider, a successful hunter, and one of the most substantial citizens north of 80. It was only a matter of color and latitude that kept Eska from being a vestryman in a fashionable church and a prominent member of a country club. And, too, he was always kind and indulgent. Only yesterday he had given her an eider duck coat; the week before it had been a handsomely painted fish bladder and a new pair of sealskin pants. Yet Mrs. Eutskra was far from happy; and now, as she stirred the fish entrails, she sighed heavily.

Meantime, Mr. Eutskra was revolving in his mind certain plans for the day. He told himself that he was entitled to a little recreation; that it was coming to him while the weather was yet pleasant—it was not over 70 below—for he had worked hard all summer and the winter's supply of meat was in. So, after due deliberation, he decided to go fishing with old man Atsika. They wouldn't catch anything, probably, but Atsika was an entertaining old vagabond, a tremendous liar, a gossip with a keen nose for scandal, a storyteller of rare attainments, and, in short, a delightful companion and a man to be cultivated. Moreover, Atsika had hinted that he still had left a hooter or so from the can of kerosene that he had stolen from the exploring expedition, and with this they could sit above the hole in the ice and have a good, long talkfest, with ever and anon a drink. What could be more delightful?

As he lay happily contemplating all this the disturbing thought came to him that his wife would have something to say and that it would not be entirely pleasant to hear. Why she would object to his outing he did not know; he

only knew, as a married man of many years' experience, that it was the way with women.

Lying on his back, Eska considered the situation carefully. If he slipped away without saying anything about it she was sure to find it out, and there would be trouble. If, on the other hand, he told her, he felt equally confident that she would turn thumbs down. In this state of mind he was silent for a long time, and then, obeying some unaccountable impulse, he decided to broach the matter.

So he said:

"Dearie, I think I will go fishing today."

There was no response.

"Yes," he continued, laughing a little nervously, "me and old man Atsika's going out for a little sport. If you get lonesome you can get your mother to come over."

She grunted—an ominous sign.

"I'll be back by supper-time, dearie."

She turned her wide, flat face and surveyed him with black and hostile eyes. "I never did like that old Atsika. If you're bound to go fishing it seems to me that you could find better company."

"What's the matter with Atsika?" he demanded, frowning. "He's a good friend of mine."

"I don't like him," she repeated. "And never did."

Her husband, rising to a sitting position on the edge of the couch, began to draw on a wolfskin sock.

"Well, then, dammit," he said, "I won't go."

"Oh, yes; go!" she exclaimed, excitedly raising her voice. "If you don't I'll never hear the last of it! Don't mind me!"

She began to sniffle.

Eutskra stopped drawing on the sock and sat eyeing her with angry perplexity.

"Well, I'll be dodgasted if *I* can understand you," he said, at last. "I don't know now if you want me to go or to stay."

"Oh, go! go!" she cried tearfully. "You wouldn't be happy unless you were running around with him. You never think of me!"

At this moment an odor as of burnt leather became noticeable.

"Quick, woman!" he exclaimed. "You are scorching the *kasuch!*"

She snatched the lamp from under the fish, crying,

"It's your fault. You sit there abusing me till I don't know *what* I'm doing!"

He made no reply. Silently dressing himself, he sat down to a ruined breakfast. But he couldn't eat it.

And after several attempts he got up and rummaging around found a candle which he ate in angry silence.

He could think of plenty of things to say, but he hated to quarrel before the children.

"Well, then," he said presently, "I guess I'll stick around home—all day." His manner was sullen and bitter.

She turned on him in quick dismay.

"Going to stay home—all day," she faltered. "How do you think I'm going to get anything *done?* My Lord, it's bad enough as it is, but with a man hanging around in the way all the time I'll just never—"

"Well, what in Sam Hill do you *want* me to do?"

"That's it, that's it! Go on and browbeat me! I'm only your wife! I'm—"

With a sigh Eska rose and carefully wiped the grease from his hands so that his fingers would not slip. Then seizing his wife by the throat he choked her for some minutes. He released her finally, and as she dropped to the floor he put on his fur mittens and started for the door.

But she staggered to her feet and was after him in an instant.

"Eska! Don't go! Don't leave me alone—when I love you so! I do, Eska, I do! I love you, love you, love you!"

He shook his head wrathfully.

"I said I was going fishing, and dammit, I'm going!"

"If you leave me you're a brute, a

brute!" she cried, throwing herself in front of him.

He wavered for an instant, and then brushing her roughly aside he went out. A few minutes later he was down the street whistling for Atsika.

"Come on, At," he said, when that worthy poked his head out of his igloo; "come on—we're going fishing."

Atsika emerged instantly.

"You're on!" he said, grinning. "Let's make a day of it."

Eska flushed uneasily.

"No," he said, with some embarrassment; "I can't stay long. I promised the wife to be back early. And say," he added, "let's go this other way—I don't want the missus to see us."

THE WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW

By Leslie Nelson Jennings

I KNOW a little silver bird
Who blows a silver flute;
He pipes the world a wistful tune
When other birds are mute.

His three notes tremble in the dawn
So plaintively and clear;
I think it is his breaking heart
Blown through the trees I hear.

I know a little silver bird,
And when the leaves are gone
He takes his tiny silver flute
And sorrows in the dawn.

Oh laggard with your sobbing flute,
The world is old and gray;
A bitter wind comes up like death,
And love is long away!

AUTHORS who write stories about love are usually sarcastic married men. Authors who write stories about divorce are usually hopeful married men.

GOD created women over 40 that women under 30 might regret life less.

IN the game of love, to be serious is to be ludicrous.

A DEPLORABLE THEORY OF THE THEATER

By George Jean Nathan

IN the career of the critic of the theater there are three more or less distinct periods: first, the period in which he passionately believes and vehemently conjures the theater to be a lyceum of art; second, the period in which he passionately hopes and vehemently prays that the theater may be a lyceum of art; and third, the period in which he rather good-naturedly comes to the conclusion that his view of the theater has been all wrong, and doesn't admit it. After fourteen years of professional criticism, I have the honour to announce that I am presently approaching the third period.

That the percussion of wit and idea is considerably less the business of the stage than the percussion of bilbo and rear trouser is an æsthetic to which even the most stubborn-minded critic becomes in time affectingly privy. Yet that he continues thereafter to maintain his old pretence and keep his discovery secret is no more to his discredit than it is to the discredit of a physician to keep the truth from a patient at death's point or to the discredit of a priest to keep confidential a parishioner's confession of sin. For example, the wittiest line of Alfred Capus makes me laugh in the theater not one-tenth so hard as the spectacle of one pickle-herring clouting another over the ear with a chocolate éclair, but do I admit the fact? I do not. And why? For the same reason that the defending lawyer doesn't admit the avowed guilt of his client. The critic who best serves the theater must be at once a hypocrite and a surpassing liar. He must stand, a giant and immovable rock, against the tides of truth and honesty. He must, for the good of the theater, deny with all the vouchers and eloquence at his command that the theater is a mere place for light amusement, and what is more, he must prove that denial unassailably, incontrovertibly. If the theater is to be made better, finer, it is to be made so only by a critical conspiracy of silence. The married man lies about the happiness of married life, converts the recalcitrant and doubting bachelor and so serves the race. The historian lies about history, spreads the falsehoods in the school books and so serves his nation by creating in its future peoples a national admiration and a deep patriotism. Parents lie that the virgin and blooming minds of their children may not be sullied by unlovely facts; the church lies that life may be made the more mellow and hope the more reasonable; art itself lies that the truth may be made beautiful. And so, too, the critic of theatrical art must lie. While agreeing that the primary function of the theater is the stimulation of its audiences' emotions, and that the theater serves its ends in the degree of such stimuli, he must yet with professional air pretend to believe that Margaret Mayo's "Baby Mine" is not so laughful as Molière's "Fourberies de Scapin," that Sheldon's "Nigger" is not so thrilling as Maeterlinck's "Death of Tintagiles," that Meyer-Förster's "Old Heidelberg" is not so touching as Ibsen's "Little Eyolf," and that Miss Marion Davies in a blue dress doing

nothing and doing it not particularly well is not so incendiary as Mrs. Leslie Carter doing "Two Women" with an immense technical fire.

If civilization is the history of repressions, the artistic prosperity of the theater is the history of critical repressions no less. The idea that the first-rate critic of the theatrical arts who knows Shakespeare's "Merry Wives of Windsor" by heart honestly prefers Shakespeare's "Merry Wives of Windsor" in the theater to de Caillavet's and de Flers' "The King"—and in the soundest of estimates is more genuinely amused by it—is of a kidney with the idea that he actually finds a greater measure of comical satisfaction in Marcel Vallée's Toby Belch in Copeau's presentation of "Twelfth Night" than in Raymond Hitchcock's photographer in the presentation of "Hitchy-Koo." But to ask the critic frankly to confess to such preferences and frankly to expound their integrity is to ask him to bring the uneducated mob theatergoer down to his own educated theatrical level; in other words, to rend a child's pretty fairy tale, to destroy those illusions of the theater that, like a desert's blue mirage, lead ever the trusting hopefully on—in short, out of his superior knowledge to rob the theater of its beautiful faith in Santa Clauses and Little Laughing Eyes, in Titanias and Tinker Bells and all the other nixies of an artistic never-never-land. Your astute critic knows better than this. To him, his reader is ever a little Patricia Carleon and he no intruder upon her fond phantasms.

The biography of dramatic criticism is the autobiography of sly hypocrisy. The younger Dumas, a sharp critic, comparing the theater with the church, said, "You cannot gain the ear of the multitude for any length of time or in any efficacious way save in the name of their higher interests." And then sat himself down and wrote "Camille," which, in the name of the multitude's higher interests, made the multitude slobber over a sentimental prostitute. Hazlitt, criticizing ever directly from the intellect, paid his greatest tribute to Joseph Fawcett, a friend who criticized ever directly from the emotions. Where a man who has satirized and made droll mock of his own critical attitude so tidily as Anatole France? And the critic Shaw who wrote that in the theater he shivered with apprehension as to the potential brutalities of Benedick and Mercutio whenever they approached a woman or an old man is the same playwright Shaw who wrote Bill Walker, Edstaston and a round dozen like them.

It always has been that the critic has eloquently professed one thing about the theater while he was a critic and has then promptly pulled off his slouch hat and whiskers when he turned playwright and done exactly the opposite. The dramatic criticisms of Robert de Flers in "Figaro" and his subsequent comic opera "Les Travaux d'Hercule" and comedy "Les Sentiers de la Vertu" are as hard to reconcile one with the other as are the criticisms of Jules Lemaître in the "Journal des Débats" and his subsequent "Révoltée." To read Wedekind's "Art of the Theater" and other critical papers and then see his plays is to smile broadly into one's cuff. To read Bahr, the critic, in the Vienna "Tageblatt" and then to lay an eye to Bahr, the playwright, in "The Mother" or "The Apostle" is to negotiate a hollow cough. The Charles Lamb of criticism is hardly the Charles Lamb of the prevenient farce "Mr. H." Victor Hugo, the critic of "Le Conservateur Littéraire," is a twenty-eighth cousin to Victor Hugo, the dramatist of "Le Roi S'Amuse." . . . And seizing the parachute and dropping a thousand miles, we behold Mr. Clayton Hamilton, august professor-critic to the "Bookman," to whom little appears critically palatable save Molière and Shakespeare, writing "The Big Idea" for production by George Cohan, and, what is even more droll, Mr. George Jean Nathan, rowdy critic to THE SMART SET, to whom little appears critically palatable save French farce and Ziegfeld, writing the

Scandinavian "Eternal Mystery." What an obscene clowning is indeed on the world!

But, as man's conscious self-deception as to woman's superior spirituality is vital to the prosperity of society, so this conscious critical gullery is essential to the highest interests of the theater. No first-rate, or even second-rate, critic any longer believes that the stage is the place for thought, or views the theater as an educational institution. The nearest the stage ever gets to thought is the presentation and re-establishment of an accepted platitude in terms of an unaccepted ratiocination. Thus, such a so-called thoughtful play as "Man and Superman" is simply the accepted Schopenhauer platitude on woman the pursuer expounded in what, to a theater audience that has always accepted the platitude with a deadly seriousness, has hitherto been to that audience an unaccepted sportive dialectic. Thus, again, such a so-called thoughtful play as Bergstrom's "Karen Borneman," recently produced in the Greenwich Village Theater, is merely the accepted de Lambert platitude on the command of the passions expounded in what, to a theater audience that since the time of Congreve has accepted the platitude with a light heart, has hitherto been to that audience an unaccepted tragic dialectic.

Secondly, no first-rate, or even second-rate, critic longer believes that the stage is the place for fine dramatic literature since, save on very rare occasions, the presentation of fine dramatic literature is left entirely in the hands of amateurs, and since amateurs, for all their initial acumen, are scarcely happy in bringing to fine dramatic literature the histrionic experience, the finish and warmth essential to its prosperous interpretation. To object here that this is a very silly argument since it offers no reason why fine dramatic literature should not therefore all the more find its place upon the professional stage is to believe that the professional actor who enjoys all the experience, finish and warmth that the amateur lacks, enjoys at the same time the amateur's intelligence. Can you, in all the theaters of the world, and more particularly in the English-speaking theaters, think of a carefully deduced company of professional actors able to interpret, for instance, Dunsany's "Gods of the Mountain" half way to your satisfaction? Can you, in all the theaters of the world, think of a single stage producer able to produce, to the full of your imagination, the "Dream Play" of Strindberg? Fine dramatic literature, in short, belongs not upon the stage, but in the library. The theory, revered in certain quarters, that all plays are written to be acted or they are not plays is of a piece with the theory that all music is written to be sung or it is not music. Some plays are too beautiful for the spoken stage; they are orchestrated alone for the strings of the silent imagination. . . . A poem need not be recited aloud to be a poem.

In a word, the discerning critic comes to realize that the place of the theater in the community is infinitely less the place of the university, the studio and the art gallery than the place of the circus, the rathskeller and the harem. The theater is no more to be appraised from the point of view of the casual college doctor who once in a while finds his alien way into it than the bar-room is to be appraised from the point of view of the prohibitionist. The theater is, simply, plainly—and in the soundest critical definition—a place where a well-educated, well-bred, well-fed man may find something to divert him pleasantly for a couple of hours. And how is this well-educated, well-bred, well-fed man to be diverted? Certainly not by so-called intellectual drama, for if he desired intellectual stimulation he would go to a lecture chamber or a comradely ale clinic or stay at home and read. Certainly not by an ostentatious spectacle of good manners, for good manners are no novelty to him and did he crave an immediate pageant of them all he would need do is call upon one of his friends. Certainly not by fine literature, for fine

literature is less a diversion to him than a regular habit. And certainly not by any analogous thing that is part and parcel of his routine. What he wants is the opposite of that to which he is accustomed. In brief, diversion by contrast, by æsthetic shock. And this is what he looks to the theater to provide him. He wants horse-play, belly laughter, pretty women, insane melodrama, lovely limbs, lively tunes, bold colours, loud humours, farce, flippancy, fol-de-rol. He wants Billy B. Van above Robert B. Mantell, Ann Pennington above Olga Nethersole, the "Follies" above "The Wild Duck," Urban at his worst above Copeau at his best, the slapstick above the sceptre of Claudius—life, colour, movement and gaiety above problems, monotones, technique and authentic merit.

This, then, is the fairest critical view of the theater. But since it is obviously directed at and from only the best type of theatergoer, it is, in like obviousness, not safely to be divulged to the masses. Of this the sincere critic is ever deeply appreciative. He realizes that the average theatergoer is under-educated and under-bred and thus not æsthetically ready for the custard pie arts which are meet for his well-educated and well-bred brother. A boy's constitution must be fortified with pure milk before he may, as a man, amuse himself with ethyl alcohol; a boy must know the Bible before Rabelais, ladies before geishas, addition before subtraction. And, in like manner, the average illiterate theatergoer must be confronted steadily with pure artistic thoughts and elevated purposes and his footsteps set with diligence and care in the direction of the so-called literary drama and the drama of ideas that he may in time gain the necessary background we all of us must gain ere we are privileged to cavort before it. And so, gentlemen, when I write in the public prints that I enjoy the comedy of Shakespeare more than the comedy of Harry Watson, Jr., I lie. Just as I lie when with all my familiar and persuasive eloquence I prove that I find a greater theatrical pleasure in Tolstoi than in the dancing of Doloretes. My only apology is that I lie, and nobly, for the good of the theater.

II

THESE superficially unseemly thoughts obtrude as I consider the case of Mr. Jesse Lynch Williams' play, "Why Marry?", currently on view in the Astor Theater. When, several years ago, I read Mr. Williams' play—it was known originally by the title "And So They Were Married"—I enjoyed it immensely. It impressed me as a well-written, amiably sophisticated and unusually witty little piece of work. But when, several weeks ago, I saw Mr. Williams' well-written, amiably sophisticated and unusually witty play in the theater, I quite frankly confess to having had a poor evening of it. The reasons are not complex. In the first place, where it took me a little less than an hour to read the little play in the warm comfort of my rooms, it took me exactly two hours and a half to engage it in a draughty theater. Where its pleasant light humours were ample to divert me and win me completely in a leisure library hour, these same pleasant light humours were altogether too meagre to cover an inflated two and one-half hours of stage traffic in which the amiable little play I had so enjoyed in the reading was with the conventional rudeness subjected to actors who absurdly delayed their several entrances that they might, in the Broadway vernacular, "get a hand," to the stereotyped actor pauses after good lines by way of forcing the audience's laughter, to the elaborate emphasizing of points and hocus-pocus of "dressing" the stage and crossings and sittings and emotional byplays and battles for the centre of the stage and takings of bows at the ends of the acts and irrelevant curtain speeches and all the like theatrical rigmarole.

To withstand the effects of such stage devastations, Mr. Williams' intrinsically meritorious play is, for me,

of too tender a theatrical skin. It lacks as a show all that it possesses as a play. Compared promiscuously and not a little drolly in local quarters with the work of Shaw, it is deficient in all those show qualities which the latter dramatist, having once been a critic, realizes are essential to the protection and salvation of wit upon the acted stage. After a turn at wits, you will always find the wily Celt bolstering up things for his literate audiences—and his illiterate actors—with a turn at slapsticks. In this wise, he at once preserves his text from stupid mummers and for intelligent auditors. Thus, his Patiomkin of "Great Catherine," after each witty observation, invariably wipes his nose with his dressing gown or falls peremptorily upon his Little Jumbo or issues an amazing expectoration or kicks the person addressed in the hip-pocket. Thus, in like situation, his Cleopatra jabs Caesar with a pin and paddles the rear Ftatateeta with a snake-skin, his Emperor makes his moustachios jump up and down by pulling a hidden string, his Tanner grabs a chauffeur by the legs and makes him waddle like a wheelbarrow, his Bentley Summerhays throws a fit on the carpet, . . . Mr. Williams, a theatrical idealist, on the other hand sets his wit upon the cold stage nude and shivering, and leaves it there crying for a clothing of extrinsic theatrical stratagems, crying to be taken back home to the library. And so I repeat that Mr. Williams' play is a play of a quality decidedly and unmistakably superior to the plays we commonly get on our native stage and, by the same mark and accordingly, a play not so appropriate to a stage designed for purposes of diversion as the decidedly and unmistakably inferior, but vastly more gay and sprightly, play of the basically not dissimilar type of Miss Clare Kummer's "Successful Calamity."

III

WITH the presentation of his latest play, "Happiness," it becomes increasingly manifest that Mr. J. Hartley Manners is attempting in the matter of dramatic technique to keep pace with, if not indeed excel, the so-called New Scenery. Where the latter has set itself to simplify stage adornment to a point of décolleté but slightly removed from that of the bedroom, Mr. Manners has proceeded to set himself to simplify drama to a point of décolleté but slightly removed from that of the bathroom. His most recent exhibit discards not only conflict, symmetry, coherence, action, plot, ideas, denouement and the rest of the customary elements of drama, but acts as well. He scorns acts; he calls his divisions "phases"; and his aloofness is further emphasized by his beatific indifference to such minor matters as bridging over these several "phases" or making them advance his theme or develop his characters or do anything, in sooth, but sit around on the stage and phase. It has been written of Sardou that he invented his action and then carefully kept it in the wings and had it announced by letters and telegrams. Mr. Manners goes a step further and dispenses with the letters and telegrams.

Now, this might all be very interesting were Mr. Manners a playwright of sharp imagination or keen wit, but it is scarcely so when the playwright is the sort whose imagination would appear to be limited to pale rivulets from Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett and whose wit, judging from "Happiness," would appear very largely to be confined to vaudeville cracks at Brooklyn, Flatbush, the difficulty of maneuvering dinner forks in their proper sequence, the garrulity of box parties and the splashing proclivities of noodle soup. Such an exhibit as "Happiness" is, indeed, little else than a serialized vaudeville sketch in the several installments of which the character of the star actress is developed in terms of increasingly becoming dresses. Miss Laurette Taylor, the star actress in the present instance, is a particularly agreeable soubrette-comedienne — a kind of Burbanking of Miss Frances

White and Mr. Frank Tinney—but her continued appearance in these fragile limericks is rapidly reducing her talents to a rubber-stamp.

IV

WERE Mr. Edward Sheldon commissioned to touch up, let us say, Ibsen's "Ghosts" for the current stage, it is an eminently safe wager he would go about the enterprise something like this:

OSWALD

(Sits in the arm-chair without moving. Suddenly, as in the distance a street-organ is heard playing "O Parigi" from "Traviata.")
Mother, give me the sun.

MRS. ALVING

(By the table, starts and looks at him.)
What do you say?

OSWALD

(Repeats, in a dull, toneless voice as the street-organ dies away and there is heard, from a neighbouring house, the voice of a young girl humming Johann Strauss' "Blue Danube" waltz.)
The sun. The sun.

MRS. ALVING

(Goes to him.)
Oswald, what is the matter with you?

OSWALD

(His muscles relax; his face becomes expressionless; his eyes take on a glassy stare . . . . In the next room a phonograph begins to play "Sempre Amar" from "Faust.")
The sun—

MRS. ALVING

(Quivering with terror.)
What is this? *(Shrieks)* Oswald! What is the matter with you? *(Falls on her knees beside him and shakes him.)* Oswald! Oswald! Look at me! Don't you know me?

OSWALD

(Tonelessly as before. The phonograph stops. There is a pause. In the distance is heard faintly a church choir singing Rheinberger's Requiem for Soldiers of the Franco-Prussian War.)
The sun—the sun!

MRS. ALVING

(Springs up in despair, entwines her hands in her hair and shrieks.)
I cannot bear it! *(Whispers, as though petrified.)* I cannot bear it! Never! *(Suddenly.)* Where has he got them? *(Fumbles hastily in his breast.)* Here! *(Shrinks back a few steps and screams.)* No, no, no! Yes! No, no!

(She stands a few steps away from him with her hands twisted in her hair and stares at him in speechless horror. As she stands so, there is heard approaching in the street below a party of merrymakers with a band playing Parry's "The Prodigal Son.")

OSWALD

(Motionless as before.)
The sun—the sun!
(The band gradually dies out in the distance. There is a long pause. From some place far away come the strains of Tschaikowski's "Pathétique" as the curtain slowly falls.)

Mr. Sheldon's inordinate affection for piccolos, fife and drum corps, hautboys, love-birds, harps, choirs, music boxes, military bands, street-organs and Victrolas in the wings is once again evidenced in his version of "Camille" for Miss Ethel Barrymore. "Music off" is to the Sheldon faith what clothes off is to the Ziegfeld. As a result his plays and his revisions of plays generally give one the impression that the theater in which they happen to be presented is situated always next door to Aeolian Hall.

To his amendment of the younger Dumas' antique, Mr. Sheldon has brought precisely the same tactics which last season he brought to his refurbishing of John Raphael's dramatization of "Peter Ibbetson" and which, several years ago, he brought to his original composition "Romance." Always a shrewd theatrician and one privy to the weak spots in the public's emotional composition, his failure to give "Camille" the bloom of youth is less to be attributed to him than to the nature of the play itself. "Camille" is in its every feature intrinsically so a thing of the show shop of a far yesterday that no amount of nose powder and false curls can make it pass muster as a dramatic flapper. The wrinkles of its flabby emotionalisms and the crows'-feet under its melodramatic machinery nothing can avail to conceal. Emotions have their fashions no less than millinery, and the emotions of the lady of the camellias, theatrically at least, are for the time being as out of date as the emotions of Olympe

Taverny, Hazel Kirke or Felicia Hindemarsh. Sheldon, for all his skill and close acquaintance with what are known as the modern stage hokums, cannot distill a present-day theater audience over the violently coloured pathos of the repentant fast lady. That pathos, unalloyed with humour and the more modern amiable philosophies, belongs to the epoch preceding Ambrose Thomas' Mignon, the stolen child, and Giarno, the gipsy chief; Bronson Howard's "Kerchival, forget those last bitter words I said to you"; and Loie Fuller's serpentine dance.

Miss Barrymore is not especially happy in the rôle of the Gautier. She interprets the physical side of the latter as if carnality were entirely a negotiation of the eyes.

V

ALTHOUGH the authors are not above soliciting laughter with such plain-faced stratagems as the employment of some such unusual polysyllabic word as "bibliopolistic" and the retort on the part of the character addressed that he has never eaten it, F. Tennyson Jesse's and H. M. Harwood's comedy "Billeted" is in the main a considerably better piece of stage writing than is usually vouchsafed the local audience. Suggestive in its humours of the Clare Kummer sort of thing, it discloses no little skill in the jockeying of polite smiles and a decidedly likeable reticence in the matter of forcing its points. A tittle of a kind of "Nobody's Widow" story is taken by the playwrights, held at arms' length between the tips of their fingers and nonchalantly turned this way and that the while they drolly make faces at it and press it, like a rubber toy, into divers fantastic shapes. The result is an agreeable, if frail, theatrical evening, the good impression of which is considerably heightened by an excellent performance in the pivotal role on the part of Miss Margaret Anglin. It is the authors' misfortune, however, that their play has been staged with an unlovely hand.

VI

"PARLOR, Bedroom and Bath," by the Messrs. Bell and Swan, is an Avery Hopwood farce not written by Avery Hopwood. Hopwood's success in the way of risqué farce is grounded on an unerring knowledge of just the proper word for just the improper place, and to this secret the composers of the farce in point are strangers. As a consequence, their work is mere vulgar vaudeville where the aim was doubtless more polished extravagance. There are a few good round slapstick laughs in the affair, but these are brewed less by the text than by the physical monkeyshines of the actors.

VII

COMING to music shows and harking back to my introductory remarks, the almost still-born "Words and Music" seemed to me to represent and fulfil, and quite effectively, what is after all the primary function of the theater. It therefore failed signally to enjoy the financial success of such an infinitely less representative exhibit as, let us say, Mr. Williams' infinitely more stately "Why Marry?" And why did it not enjoy an equal financial success? For the simple reason that it unaffectedly got right down to the bare knuckle of the amusement platform, without hocus-pocus said "I am here to make you feel jinksful by fair means or foul—chiefly foul," without further ado proceeded admirably to do so, and accordingly alienated that goodly illiterate group of theatergoers who have been led by sleeve-chuckling critics to look to the theater for an easy education in the beaux arts and who view being loudly amused at a music show as akin to a public confession of vulgarity and witlessness. By that other group of theatergoers, however, the group given by nature and habit to a preference of "The Revolt of the Angels" and Mozart's Jupiter Symphony over "Extricating Obadiah" and "Under the Moon with Minnie," such an

exhibition as "Words and Music" was welcomed as a couple of hours of refined diversion. In place of the familiar Shaw reflexes of "Why Marry?" (the Shaw originals being themselves reflexes of familiar vancouriers), this group found here a more genuine source of amusement in such things as the burlesque of the Russian ballet's "Scheherazade" with a comic Irishman as *primo ballerino,* the famous custard bush achieved by crossing the milk-weed with the egg-plant, Mr. Richard Carle's recital of the stirring voyage of the good ship Epidermis, and kindred unbecoming but highly stimulating didoes. In place of what is known to the untutored masses as intelligent entertainment, this other group found here all the extravagant and volatile tomfoolery that an actually intelligent person has need of every once in a while for purposes of pleasant change.

VIII

THE method of Mr. Eugene Walter in the achievement of stage melodrama would appear to be as follows: first, to take a story intrinsically devoid of melodrama; second, to write that story on the smallest possible number of Western Union Telegraph blanks; third, to throw away half the blanks; and, fourth, by way of making the remaining blanks then pass for tense melodrama, to cause what is written on them to be recited by a company of actors in a rapid, nervous and confused whisper. This method is again expounded in Mr. Walter's "The Heritage," a Krafft-Ebing memorandum upon which is superimposed a fable of the species made familiar in the yellow-back days of Rodriguez Ottolengui's "Crime of the Century." Although it is something like thirty years since the rainy day I hid behind a coal-bin in the cellar and, thus sequestered from parental eyes, perused the *conte* in question, I seem to recall that it told, at bottom, much the sort of story Mr. Walter tells here, a story of abnormality, blood lust and, by way of gratification of that lust, choking of pet monkeys in place of Mr. Walter's choking of pet kittens. And it was, I further recall—unless the intervening time has clouded memory—a tale of stupefying murders and amazing detectives, as the play of Mr. Walter is a tale of like *divertissements.*

Mr. Walter's method of melodrama writing, to which I have alluded above, may be concretely impressed upon the reader by asking him to think of some such jingle as, for instance,

> Mary had a little lamb
> Its fleece was white as snow,
> And everywhere that Mary went
> The lamb was sure to go.

Here, the reader will grant, may be inherent many things, but, so far as the naked eye can plumb, assuredly no great amount of melodrama. Now, however, for Mr. Walter's secret. First, imagine a darkened stage. Then,

Detective X

(Quickly flashing a pocket-light around the dark room, taking three rapid strides toward the door at left centre, and speaking in a rapid, quivering undertone):

Maryhadalittlelamb.

Detective Y

(Stepping quietly to Detective X's side, placing a restraining hand upon his wrist, and speaking in a breathless whisper):

Itsfleece waswhiteas snow.

Detective X

(Glancing quickly to the right and extinguishing the pocket-flash. In a voice shaking with suppressed excitement and scarcely audible):

Andevery wherethatmary went.

Detective Y

(Handing Detective X his revolver. In a tense vibrating pianissimo):

The lambwas suretogo!

—and you have the Walter system. A pocket-flash, a revolver, a dark stage, and the most innocent lines spoken as if the actors had lost their voices and were victims of palpitation of the heart—and you have the necessary air of mystery, foreboding and suspense. At this business, Mr. Walter is an adept.

LE RÊVE DU PRÉVENU

By Paul Hébert

ALORS, c'est vous qui êtes chargé deme défendre?

—Oui, mon ami, j'ai cet honneur.

— Trop aimable cher maître, prenez donc la peine de vous asseoir.

— Je vois que vous êtes un inculpé sans mauvaise humeur, et j'espère bien qu'étant donné cet excellent état d'esprit vous allez me seconder utilement dans ma tâche. Il faut me faire bien sincèrement le récit de l'acte qui vous a conduit à comparaître devant les juges.

— Ecoutez maître, comme je n'ai rien caché au *curieux* qui m'a fait subir le premier interrogatoire, il me semble bien inutile de vous raser avec mon histoire vécue, c'est un genre qui devient si vulgaire.

— Très bien je n'insisterai pas, puisque vous m'affirmez avoir été sincère dans vos réponses au juge d'instruction. Il est nécessaire pourtant que vous me donniez quelques renseignements sur votre vie et sur votre famille.

— Quant à cela, ça n'a rien à faire, Monsieur l'Avocat. Votre confrère m'a fait le coup la dernière fois, je ne marche plus. Figurez-vous que je m'etais offert le luxe d'un petit viol, ce qui était courageux à mon âge, vous en conviendrez, et aussi qu'il fallait que les affaires soient devenues difficiles pour avoir recours à ce procédé. Enfin je parviens à me faire boucles, après bien des efforts car la police ne voulait pas prendre au sérieux les indications que je lui adressais par lettre recommandée. Lassée de me chercher elle se décida pourtant à m'arrêter. Je fis des aveux complets et croyais que mon compte était bon, excellent même, mon passé m'assurant la rélégation après cette condamnation que j'attendais. Je passai toutes mes journées de prévention à faire des projets d'avenir, songeant que dans peu d'années, je pourrais me livrer aux travaux agricoles. Patatras . . . l'avocat plaida et mes rêves s'envolèrent.

Ce bougre-là ne s'était-il pas amusé à raconter que j'étais fils d'alcooliques, que mes vieux m'avaient roué de coups, que mes frères étaient des voyous, que mes sœurs faisaient dès leur jeune âge une noce crapuleuse, qu'enfin de toute la famille il n'y avait que moi de foncièrement bon et que j'avais été un enfant martyr.

A ce moment j'ai senti que cela tournait mal, j'ai voulu protester, dire que j'étais fils unique, que mon père était mort, au passage de la Bérésina. Votre copain s'est mis à hurler: "Voyez le bon fils, le bon frère, au risque de payer pour tous, il veut réhabiliter cette famille où tout n'est que boue sauf lui!"

Tout le monde pleurait, les gardes, le public, les jurés. Ma victime qui était présente déclara qu'elle était désireuse de m'épouser. Bien entendu je fus acquitté.

Ce coup-ci faites pas comme votre confrère, arrangez-vous à me faire condamner et je vous en serai très reconnaissant. Pendant que nous sommes ensemble, donnez-moi donc votre adresse, je vous enverrai quelques fruits exotiques, lorsque je serai là-bas. Je ne suis pas un goujat moi, je sais vivre.

LITERÆ HUMANIORES

By H. L. Mencken

I

THE Puritan, in this grand republic, is the boss of us all, and yet he figures in the beautiful letters of the country very little, and in its polemics even less. Perhaps a sort of unwritten doctrine of *lèse-majesté* protects him; it is, in fact, a somewhat hazardous thing to flout him, even academically; the contumacious have to reckon with the secular arm. Whatever the cause, there is an aching paucity of studies of him. Since Hawthorne wrote "The Scarlet Letter," in 1850, who else has attempted a full-length portrait of the original Puritan, the father of our national culture, the inventor of Americanism in the arts? And where, in our fiction, is there anything about the sturdy Puritan of today, with his passion for harsh and preposterous laws, his bilious suspicion of all joy and beauty, his fantastic messianic delusion, his moral grandeur and hoggishness? You will find a vivid sketch of him in E. W. Howe's "The Story of a Country Town" (now happily reprinted by the Harpers), but it is only a sketch. Howells has dodged him; all the rest have dodged him. Our fictioneers, engrossed by lesser types, have overlooked the archetype. And our psychologists with them. What a document might be made of a Freudian examination of a vice crusader, a teetotaler, a Y. M. C. A. director, a Methodist! Obscene the thing would be, no doubt, but illuminating, messieurs, illuminating!

Failing such large and malicious proddings, one must be content with "The Heart of the Puritan," by Elizabeth Deering Hanscom (*Macmillan*), an effort to conjure up an image of the original Dr. CH_3COOH Barebones by putting together artful selections from his own writings. The material comes from the letters that he wrote and the diaries that he kept in the great days of the New England theocracy, and it is moulded into chapters which give a very lively and I daresay very accurate picture of life in that simple, swinish and highly evangelical era. Miss Hanscom is a lady professor; her lifework lies in inoculating the nascent suffragettes of Smith College with the elements of Irving, Jane Austen and Bulwer-Lytton. Moreover, she is of New England birth, and *Doctor Philosophiae* of Yale. Nevertheless, she contrives to let in some true light upon the Puritan, at home and in meeting, chasing witches and praising God, robbing his neighbor and pulling the devil's tail. So early as 1680, it appears, the Bostonians were already proficient in that pecksniffery which yet marks them off. "All their religion," said the snooping Jasper Danckaerts in that year, "consists in observing Sunday. . . . Drinking and fighting occur there not less than elsewhere." John Dunton, coming eight years later, made much the same report. He found that "for kissing a woman in the Street, though but in way of Civil Salute," they punished by whipping, but that "for Lying and Cheating they outvye Judas, and all the false other cheats in Hell." "There is no Trading for a stranger with them," continued John, "but with a Grecian Faith, which is, not to part with your Ware without ready Money; for they are generally

very backward in their Payments, great censors of other Men's Manners, but extremely careless of their own, yet they have a ready correction for every vice." Half a century later, in 1740, George Whitefield still found them "close Pharisees;" and close Pharisees they remain to this day.

Altogether, I commend "The Heart of the Puritan" to your polite attention. It is full of curious information, and conducive to sinfulness and happiness. Another instructive tome is "The History of Tammany Hall," by Gustavus Myers (*Boni-Liveright*), a second edition, revised and enlarged. The first edition was published by a Socialist publisher in Chicago, and Dr. Myers says in his preface that no regular publisher in New York would have anything to do with it. He apparently believes that a fear of Tammany was behind this diffidence, but I can't imagine why any publisher should be afraid of Tammany. Lambasting Tammany is a very profitable business for publishers; if it pays with newspapers and magazines, why shouldn't it also pay with books? But the point need not detain us. The main thing is that the author, with the same gigantic industry he displayed in his "History of the Great American Fortunes," has rescued the dark and intricate chronicle of Tammany from the limbo of forgotten pamphlets, newspapers and court proceedings, and put it into such good order that it makes very diverting reading. It is, indeed, a sort of picaresque romance in the grand manner. In "Barry Lyndon" itself you will find no more exhilarating knavery.

The trouble with Dr. Myers, as historian, is that he is a bit too indignant, and a bit too ingenuous. He accepts almost at face value the pretensions of all the mountebanks who have got on in politics by shedding tears over Tammany, from the Know-nothings to Sulzer. In the Sulzer case he even edits the facts. For example, he says that Chief Justice Edgar M. Cullen, president of the court of impeachment, held that "there was no evidence of any deceit or fraud" by Sulzer. The truth is that Dr. Cullen found the eminent martyr guilty of many deceits, and only voted for his acquittal on the ground that all of them had been committed before his inauguration. In other words, his vote was grounded upon a legal technicality, and not upon any illusion that Sulzer was an innocent. In the case of the late Mitchel, Dr. Myers swallows buncombe in a somewhat similar way. He seems to accept quite gravely the theory that Mitchel was a self-sacrificing reformer, bent only upon saving the common people from the wolves. The fact is that Mitchel was a limber-kneed, self-seeking jenkins and bounder, willing to go to any length to keep his place at the public teat, and that Tammany had only to print the truth about him to beat him. Herein lies Tammany's strength; it can always afford to wait, and if it only waits long enough the professional reformers will inevitably perform harikari and give it back its graft. That these reformers, taking them as they run, are more honest men than the Big Tims and the Charlie Murphys—this is something I should like to see proof of.

"Mark Twain's Letters," in two volumes (*Harper*), need no long encomium. It goes without saying that they are capital stuff, and it also goes without saying that their editor, Albert Bigelow Paine, has done his work intelligently. When one thinks of such an old woman as Edmund Gosse writing a life of Swinburne, one begins to realize how lucky Mark was to find a Paine to do his biography and edit his literary remains. The biography steadily improves on acquaintance. It is comprehensive, judicious, satisfying. It leaves out all non-essentials, but never overlooks what one wants to know. Much praise is lavished upon Morley's "Life of Gladstone." I think that Paine's "Mark Twain" is a better work, if only because it is more intimate, more human. The "Letters" supplement it admirably. They are selected with the greatest discrimination, and

Paine hangs them together with a running commentary that should serve as a model to all future editors of such things. Let us hope that he is making good progress with Mark Twain's autobiography, a work that will probably run to a dozen volumes. A dozen? If possible, let us have two dozen, three dozen! What a joy to turn to Mark after wading through a shelf of new and bad books—Mark on Jane Austen, Mark on Roosevelt, Mark on hell, Mark on anything!

II

A DILIGENT search fails to reveal any masterpieces among the current novels, but there are at least a number that rise above the common level sufficiently to offer no downright insult to the judicious, among them, "The Green Mirror," by Hugh Walpole (*Doran*); "The Mainland," by E. L. Grant Watson (*Knopf*); "Mottke the Vagabond," by Sholom Ash (*Luce*); "The Tortoise," by E. F. Benson (*Doran*); and "What Never Happened," by Boris Savinkov (*Knopf*). Three English, one Russian and one Yiddish: this is not the Americano's round. The native novel, indeed, has been going downhill for a number of years. The great days when Frank Norris and Jack London were alive, Winston Churchill and Booth Tarkington were young, and the ante-chambers of romance swarmed with gifted boys and girls—that gaudy, far-off era has closed. Socialistic flubdub and the lure of the cheap (and rich) magazine finished London, even before he died: an ironical double damnation. Dreiser has published no fiction since "The 'Genius'," in the first half of 1915—three years ago. Churchill has become a propagandist and almost unreadable; worse, various younger men, among them Sherwood Anderson, threaten to follow him upon the stump. Tarkington, still full of high skill, stoops to such easy killings that he is praised by Major-General Roosevelt. Harry Leon Wilson, with "The Spenders" far behind him, keeps to the same safe waters. Mrs. Wharton marks time. Most of the other ladies, especially La Atherton, grow maudlin and ridiculous. Where are the men of promise of yesteryear: Owen Johnson, Ernest Poole, Robert Herrick, S. F. Whitman, Henry Milner Rideout, *et al.*? The sheriff returns them *non est inventus*, almost *non est tanti*. Hergesheimer, nearly alone, holds the trench; let us hope that he will still be there, and with his withers unwrung, when reinforcements arrive at last. As for James Branch Cabell, one of the few remaining survivors, he repudiates the novel, dances a hoop-la on it, and heels the stuffing out of it.

Meanwhile, there is the pale consolation afforded by the imported tales aforesaid, and particularly by "Mottke the Vagabond," done out of the Yiddish of Ash (*geb.* Asch) by Dr. Isaac Goldberg. Yiddish literature, in the main, is feeble and tawdry; the naif product of a people almost devoid of aesthetic sense. The Yiddish drama is chiefly hymned by newspaper reviewers whose acquaintance with the language is confined to the words *schadchen, joinal, schmoos* and *gefüllte-fisch*. Translated into plain English, the bulk of it lies somewhere between a boob-bumper by the late Charles Klein and a burlesque show afterpiece. As for the normal Yiddish novel, it bridges the gap between the inflammatory Socialist serials of the fourth-rate French, Belgian and Scandinavian papers and the servant-girl romances of Laura Jean Libbey and Charles Garvice. But the work of Sholom Ash is many cuts higher, and in both departments. He is no mere talented garment-worker, but a man of genuine culture and an artist of very respectable skill. Born somewhere in the morasses of Poland, he made his literary début in Warsaw, and soon caused such a stir that he was invited to Berlin. There Max Reinhardt produced his play, "Der Gott der Rache," at the Deutsches Theater, and S. Fischer, the publisher of Hauptmann, published it. "Jeph-

thahs Tochter" and "Sabbatai Zewi," following it, greatly increased his reputation, which was still further augmented by the present novel (in Yiddish "Mottke Ganef") and by a series of capital short stories. In 1909, he accompanied the Yiddish novelist and poet, Dr. Isaac Loebush Perez, to America, and, if I do not err, has lived here ever since. Since the death of Dr. Perez, in 1915, he has been generally recognized as the chief living ornament of Yiddish letters. Save it be David Pinski, indeed, he has no rival.

"Mottke Ganef" is extremely simple in structure. Its central character, Mottke (one never hears his surname), is a rogue and vagabond, and the chronicle recites his history from birth to the final disaster. The first chapter, indeed, goes back a year or so, and describes the grotesque, revolting courtship of his parents, Blind Lib and Red Zlattke. Once born and on his legs, Mottke takes to the streets, and thereafter his career is one of sordid adventure. He becomes a travelling mountebank, a petty thief and swindler, a gang leader and procurer, and finally a murderer. Two women figure ironically in his last act—Mari, a prostitute and the partner of his crime, and Channele, a low café-keeper's daughter. Channele is virtuous—perhaps the first virtuous girl that Mottke has ever known—but it is she who betrays him, and not all the gallant effort of Mari can save him from the terribly Colonel-Commissary, the dock, and Siberia. . . . As I say, an austerely simple tale, and yet there is such gusto in the telling of it that it shines with all the colors of primitive fable. It is the first novel I have ever encountered which gets a genuine glow of life into the Jews of Russia—I mean the low-caste, half-feral Jews, the kind who come to America by the shipload, and fill our back streets, and begin to get garlic into our politics. They are not sentimentalized in the story; they appear, not as mute and pathetic victims of Russian oppression, but as alert, unmoral and frequently successful rebels against it. Nevertheless, the shadow is always in the background, and one gets some understanding, amid all the Rabelaisian humors of the thing, of what it means to live under that sinister and incomprehensible menace. Ash need offer no timorous apologies for this first venture into an English dress. There are not many native fictioneers who know the business as well as he does.

Of the three English novels, two are slow in tempo and show the fine workmanship of accomplished technicians. They are "The Tortoise" and "The Green Mirror," the first a half-wistful comedy of family discomforts and the stealthy tread of middle age, and the second a mordant picture of that stupid, well-intending, unimaginative, superstitious, almost appalling English upper middle class that the war has so ruthlessly played the devil with. "The Tortoise" is the pleasanter of the two, but I think you will find "The Green Mirror" the one that will stick in your mind the longer. Mr. Walpole, in a prefatory note, himself calls attention to the fact that the England he depicts is an England that has gone headlong down the chutes of time. His story shows the first workings of the forces that undermined it—the new cult of realism and achievement against the old cult of tradition and contemplation. The entrance of Philip Mark, fresh from Russia and its anarchistic transvaluation of values, affects the Trenchard family like some barbaric invasion; the revolt of Katherine, the eldest daughter of the house, is treason in the very sanctuary. But out of the turmoil, young Henry Trenchard emerges, and in Henry, one somehow feels, Mr. Walpole offers us his flash of the England of tomorrow. Of all the personages of the book, this Henry is most alive. Mark takes on the heaviness of the protagonist; Katherine remains a bit vague and unaccounted for; even Mrs. Trenchard, heroically of the old order, is often rather idea than human being. But in Henry there is genuine life. He is real from his pimples to his immortal soul.

The other English novel, "The Mainland," introduces a new writer and a new scene. The transactions of the tale take place on the far northwestern coast of Australia, and the central character, John Sherwin, is a savage in all save skin until he is nearly a man grown. Superficially, the thing suggests Joseph Conrad; the island of the Sherwins, father, mother and son, might almost be the island of Heyst. But there is actually none of Conrad's quality in the story. It lacks his high sophistication, his profound irony, his astoundingly elaborated artistry. Watson, the author, is ingenuous, bald, often downright clumsy. There is no conscious cleverness in his work. All he does is to set down a simple story, vivid to his eye, deeply felt, more than likely genuinely experienced, as it unrolls before him. The result is a curious holding of the interest. It is all fantastic, but it somehow convinces. . . . "The Mainland" has reached me first, but another story by the same author, "Where Bonds Are Loosed," should be read ahead of it. The latter prepares the way: it has to do with the barbaric courtship of the elder Sherwins. Moreover, it is a better piece of writing. Meanwhile, judgment upon Watson had better wait. He has done something quite original, and full of color; it remains to be seen how far he is able to go.

"What Never Happened" is journalism rather than fiction—we are told, indeed, that the author is his own hero, and that his pictures of the Russian revolution come out of his own experience—but it is at all events journalism of a most graphic and engrossing sort. I have read in my time several drayloads of Russian novels, and all of them that have not dealt with lunatics have dealt with the bombardiers of democracy, but this is the first one that has made the oblique and mystical doings of the revolutionists comprehensible, and, what is more, interesting. Not only melodrama is here, but also reflection, philosophizing, a sardonic note. The murder of Yevgeny Pavlovich Sliozkin lifts the hair, and the fighting at the barricades is tremendous, but the best parts of the story are those which deal with the interminable meetings and plot-hatchings of the central committee, "naïvely convinced that the majority of votes cast at their convention, the defeat of the left or the victory of the right, could change the fate of Russia." In the debates of these solemn donkeys, and in the pow-wows no less of the actual bombers and throat-slitters, laboriously discussing the ethics of assassination while their victim lies at the feet—in all this bombast and wind music we may get some notion, perhaps, of the obscure processes of mind of the Bolsheviki, and in general of all the dark and otherwise fathomless doings that go on behind the veils of Holy Russia.

But the most illuminating of Russian novels, I am still convinced, is not by a Russian at all, but by Conrad the Pole, to wit, "Under Western Eyes." Once, after reading it, I tried to read Turgeniev's "Father and Son"—Howells after Anatole France, "The Bohemian Girl" after "Der Rosenkavalier," ice-cream soda after Pilsner! It simply would not go down: I have never got to the end of it to this day. Nor, for that matter, to the end of Dostoievsky's "Crime and Punishment." A great deal of humorless *schmoos* is lavished upon all these gifted Cossacks, chiefly by the sort of critic who writes essays upon the "philosophy" of Henry Van Dyke and Mrs. Humphry Ward. That some of them—for example, Andreieff—have a vast talent for the shocking and gruesome: this I am surely not fatuous enough to deny. But when they get beyond melodrama and its attendant states of mind, and begin their endless prodding into psychopathology, then they commonly become as tedious, as maudlin and as unpersuasive as their fellow psychiatrist, Peter Ilyitch Tchaikovsky, in his Pathétique Symphony, that grand delight of cultured and satanic school-marms. The thought irresistibly intrudes, on reading such fan-

ciful hospital reports, that not only the characters are insane, but the author also. Consider, for example, "A Family of Noblemen," by Mikhaïl Y. Saltykov (*Boni-Liveright*). Here we have a simple story of an aristocratic family that is going downhill—a commonplace theme, well worked out by others, nothing mysterious about it. But Saltykov is not content with his facts; he has to be Russian, and so he makes most of his people idiots. Moreover, he plays idiot himself and even assumes that his readers are also idiots, for in the very middle of his story he changes the character of his central personage gratuitously and completely, and then goes on gaily, as if nothing has happened! Yet this book, I hear, has been praised by Arnold Bennett. Well, well, dear old Bennett! Dost recall, beloved, how all our corn-fed Taines and Brandeses fell for Artsybashev's "Sanin," a work of precisely the same heft and dignity, and of precisely the same fame in France and Germany (and no doubt in Russia, too) as Mme. Elinor Glyn's "Three Weeks"? . . .

Vincent O'Sullivan's "Sentiment" (*Small-Maynard*) leaves me with a lingering sense of disappointment, not because it is a bad piece of work, but because it follows upon the heels of something much better, to wit, "The Good Girl," by the same author. Perhaps there is a further reason: Penelope Hazard, the most vivid character in the book, remains in the background until it is half done. But here something must be allowed to mere mood and prejudice. It is as difficult to say why one likes one novel better than another as it is to say why one likes the sound of a viola better than the sound of a clarinet. At all events, there is "The Good Girl," a sound and excellent book, and O'Sullivan himself, a literary craftsman of fine skill and dignity. It is one of the curiosities of letters in America that he is seldom heard of. H. G. Wells' "The Soul of a Bishop," a cheap piece of balderdash, gets columns of donkeyish consideration in the newspapers, and the elderly virgins (male and female, married and unmarried) who serve us as critics stand enchanted before its Salvation Army theology. Meanwhile, "The Good Girl" is scarcely noticed. In deploring the glycosuria which afflicts American fiction I forgot O'Sullivan. He, too, I believe, is an American, and he stands outside the general decline. Like Cabell, he will be heard from hereafter.

A great deal of bad stuff remains. Stephen Leacock, in "Frenzied Fiction" (*Lane*), offers one capital piece of burlesque, "The Prophet in Our Midst," but in the main he labors heavily, and some of his humor is as tortured as the laugh-squeezing of Irvin Cobb. The war hamstrings the scaramouches; they will revive, let us hope, when the bawling of hymns of hate ceases. "His Last Bow," by A. Conan Doyle (*Doran*), is yet another reboiling of the whitened bones of Sherlock Holmes. The broth runs too thin to be appetizing. "Cabin Fever," by B. M. Bower (*Little-Brown*); "Salute to Adventurers," by John Buchan (*Doran*); "A Sheaf of Bluebells," by the Baroness Orczy (*Doran*); "13 Rue Bon Diable," by Arthur Sherburne Hardy (*Houghton-Mifflin*), and "The Sin That Was His" (*Doran*) are trade goods. "Our Square and the People In It," by Samuel Hopkins Adams (*Houghton*), is a "glad" book, and a very bad one. "Beating 'Em To It," by Chester Cornish (*Knopf*), is a tedious and horrible imitation of the late O. Henry at his worst. "The Wolf-Cub," by Patrick and Terence Casey (*Little-Brown*), is a conventional melodrama with the scenes chiefly laid in Spain. Which brings us to two genuinely Spanish novels, "The Cabin," by V. Blanco Ibañez (*Knopf*), and "The City of the Discreet," by Pio Baroja (*Knopf*). A certain mild interest attaches to these translations: they at least enable us to get some notion of what the modern Spaniards are doing. But after a prayerful reading of them I am unable to report upon those doings in anything resembling glowing terms. Both stories, indeed,